

**PREACHING THROUGH THE EYES OF EVE:  
FEMININE EXPERIENCE AND BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS**

**A Professional Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the  
School of Theology at Claremont**

**In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry**

**by  
Judy Ann Lindsey  
May 1990**

© 1990

Judy Ann Lindsey

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

*This professional project, completed by*

Judy Ann Lindsey,

*has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty  
of the School of Theology at Claremont in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of*

**DOCTOR OF MINISTRY**

*Faculty Committee*

J. Quinn Trotter

Robert L. Mack

Karen J. Tozier

April 17, 1990  
Date

Ally Moore  
Dean

## **Abstract**

### **Preaching Through The Eyes of Eve: Feminine Experience and Biblical Hermeneutics**

**Judy Ann Lindsey**

This project addresses the problem of the inadequate interpretation of biblical texts from a feminist perspective which, if brought to light, could enrich biblical interpretation for preaching. The author believes that when the patriarchal household and its patronage system is misappropriated and perpetuated in our contemporary context, it is used to affirm a patriarchal shame-based system of co-dependency which stands contrary to the experience of women in the Greco-Roman world. Therefore, this work examines the experience of women in the Greco-Roman world leading up to and including the writing of the Second Testament texts. It is also believed that patriarchy and egalitarianism were two paradigms in tension with each other in the Greco-Roman world and the biblical texts are a response to that tension. And finally, women had personal power or honor, and authority within their particular socio-historical context. They used this honor and authority to their advantage and to the advantage of others. Therefore, the author finds it necessary to bring to light the experience of women by going back to the Greco-Roman context and reconstructing the socio-historical context which gave rise to the Second Testament texts. This is accomplished through a socio-historical method of exegesis, with particular emphasis upon sociology.

The author draws upon the work of feminist writers to glean insights into the formulation of six key exegetical questions which, if applied to biblical texts, will aid in the hermeneutical task of preaching a message that is inclusive of the experience of those who have been forgotten, marginalized and disenfranchised. It is hoped that in bringing to light the experiences of women that this will provide a clearer picture which will enable individuals to be empowered to take control of their own lives, setting them free from situations and structures of the past which keep them powerless and ineffectual in making changes.

## Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
1. Introduction . . . . .	1
2. Honor and Shame and Women's Gender Roles . . . . .	12
Shame . . . . .	15
Conveyors of Toxic Shame . . . . .	17
Women's Gender Roles and an Honor/Shame System . . . . .	27
3. Power and Women's Gender Roles in the Greco-Roman Milieu . . . . .	32
The Classical Greek City-State . . . . .	33
The Hellenistic World . . . . .	42
The Roman Republic and the Imperial Roman Empire . . . . .	51
The Emergence of the Pauline Epistles . . . . .	64
4. Feminine Insights and Biblical Hermeneutics . . . . .	67
Jewish History and Patriarchalism . . . . .	67
Authority and Power . . . . .	74
Depatriarchalization within the Text . . . . .	79
Conflict between Equality and Patriarchy in the First Century . . . . .	90
5. Empowered for Ministry . . . . .	102
Appendix	
A Practical Application: A Sermon . . . . .	106
Bibliography . . . . .	118

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

The problem addressed by this project is the inadequate interpretation of biblical texts from a feminist perspective which, if brought to light, could enrich biblical interpretation for preaching. Therefore, this project undertakes to examine the experience of women in the Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods leading up to and including the time of the writing of the Christian Biblical texts. It is hoped such an examination will result in the formulation of key questions which can be applied to a biblical text and aid in its interpretation for preaching.

I believe that the Greco-Roman era had a tremendous influence upon the writing of the Second Testament texts. The biblical texts which we have today are a response, or better still, a reaction, to the Greco-Roman milieu. Patriarchy was an outgrowth of an oligarchic form of government, and egalitarianism was an outgrowth of a democratic form of government in the Classical Greek city-states. Both of these forms lived in tension with each other and coexisted in the Greek city-states. This tension is very real in the Second Testament writings if we become aware of it.

Throughout Christian history, we have allowed patriarchy to prevail in the interpretation of biblical texts, which is only one side of Greek nature and one side of the total picture. As women, we have allowed men to determine the rules by which we live. We have used biblical approaches to interpreting scripture for preaching that were developed by men and reflected male experience of the world. Such an example is the use of

Liberation Theology by feminists to speak for and interpret women's experience.

Liberation Theology is a grassroots movement which articulates male experience in the Third World. It tends to reflect a more overt, coercive and masculine approach. Even though it has proven to be very helpful in gaining a certain amount of liberation for women, yet it does not give us a clear and complete picture of women's experience which could be helpful in biblical interpretation for preaching.

I believe that we need to look again at the experience of women from the Greco-Roman period, from which the early Christian texts were formulated. It is out of this context that feminist theology can shed light upon the truths hidden within the texts. It is only then that we are able to formulate key questions which, when applied to the text, will reflect women's experience and move us to be able to examine our own context more clearly--enabling change, growth and healing.

Two major contributors to the field of biblical interpretation in a feminist perspective are Phyllis Trible and Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza. Phyllis Trible's book, Text of Terror, takes a literary-feminist perspective in reading the biblical narratives. She uses rhetorical criticism to focus upon the text in order to hear what the text is speaking. She sees the biblical texts as a patriarchal document which gives illustration after illustration of the suffering, abuse, rejection and rape of women. If we view the biblical texts in this light, we must agree with her conclusions.

For Trible, feminism is a prophetic movement which examines the status quo, pronounces judgment, and calls for repentance of a misogynist culture and faith. She sees this hermeneutic engaging scripture in various ways.



One approach documents the case against women. It cites and evaluates long neglected data that show the inferiority, subordination, and abuse of the female in ancient Israel and the early church. By contrast, a second approach discerns within the Bible critiques of patriarchy. It upholds forgotten texts and reinterprets familiar ones to shape a remnant theology that challenges the sexism of scripture. Yet a third approach incorporates the other two. It recounts tales of terror *in memoriam* to offer sympathetic readings of abused women. If the first perspective documents misogyny historically and sociologically, this one appropriates the data poetically and theologically. At the same time, it continues to search for the remnant in unlikely places. Such an approach characterizes these essays. It interprets stories of outrage on behalf of their female victims in order to recover a neglected history, to remember a past that the present embodies, and to pray that these terrors shall not come to pass again. In telling sad stories, a feminist hermeneutic seeks to redeem the time.<sup>1</sup>

She joins this perspective with the methodology of literary criticism which accents "the inseparability of form, content and meaning; the rhetorical formation of sentences, episodes, and scenes as well as overall design and plot structure; and the portrayal of characters, most especially the violated women."<sup>2</sup> Then she adds the story.

My concern with Tribble's approach is that she views patriarchy from a twentieth-century, Western viewpoint. Patriarchy is seen as abusive and oppressive. Women are powerless, dependent and without recourse, other than to turn to men for help. I do not agree with her conclusions. First, I believe that the patriarchal system was more fluid with respect to gender roles prior to the sixth century B.C.E. allowing for a greater give and take

---

<sup>1</sup>Phyllis Tribble, Texts of Terror (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 3.

<sup>2</sup>Tribble, 3-4.

within the household structure. Although after the Babylonian exile, we find written evidence of the rigid identification of gender roles within the household structure of Judaism. Secondly, the Greeks whose culture greatly influenced the people of the Mediterranean world, saw the city-state construction as an effective paradigm. It was a human construction that worked to meet the needs of a particular context. Women were responsible for the household and its management, thus, freeing the men to deal with affairs of the city-state, work in the fields, or defend the land in times of conflict. Both women and men exercised power, and women were not necessarily dependent upon men for their livelihood. Tribble's book leads me to speculate that the use of women in certain stories may have been purely metaphorical to illustrate a point with regard to the exercise of power and authority, rather than as an example of the literal experience of women.

If we totally condemn the patriarchal paradigm as an evil that has victimized women throughout history without sorting through the greater depth of complexity within this structure, then we give credence to those women who use the excuse of patriarchy for their co-dependent condition. I do not agree that women are victims without power and authority, although I do agree that there are women who have learned to give their personal power and authority away and have become victims. I agree with other feminists that biblical interpretations which are used inappropriately to victimize women, the poor, the marginalized, the disenfranchised, and so forth, are to be judged for their misappropriation of the biblical texts. Patriarchy as the sole paradigm is not appropriate for our particular context.

It is my thesis, therefore, that:

1. When the patriarchal household and its patronage system are misappropriated and misunderstood in our contemporary context, they are used to affirm a patriarchal shame-based system of co-dependency which stands contrary to the experience of women in the Greco-Roman world.

2. Patriarchy and egalitarianism were two paradigms in tension with each other in the Greco-Roman world, and the biblical texts are a response to that tension.

3. Women had personal power and authority within their particular socio-historical context and used it to their advantage and to the advantage of others.

Thus, I believe it is necessary to bring to light the experience of women and the personal power or honor which they had by going back to that particular context and reconstructing the situation which gave rise to the texts as we have them. I believe this can best be done through a socio-historical method of exegesis with particular emphasis upon sociology.

Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza's major work in the area of feminist biblical interpretation can be found in her two books, Bread Not Stone, and In Memory of Her. In her book, In Memory of Her, Fiorenza does a historical, critical reconstruction of the history of women in early Christian history in order to restore women's stories to early Christian history. She does this in order to reclaim history as both male and female.<sup>3</sup> I have two major criticisms of her work. First, she does not address the political power available to both men and women in a patronage system. I believe that if

---

<sup>3</sup>Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins (New York: Crossroad, 1988), xiv.

she had done a more sociological criticism, she might have uncovered this as a viable source of personal power which both men and women drew upon in the Greco-Roman and early Christian periods. Secondly, Fiorenza sees patriarchy as a Greco-Roman paradigm and egalitarianism as an early Christian paradigm. I disagree. I believe that patriarchy and egalitarianism were two paradigms in tension with each other in the Greco-Roman period. In fact, we can see these two models in tension with each other as early as the classical period of the Greek city-states. Furthermore, these two paradigms continued to be in tension with each other in the early Christian writings of the Second Testament. Plato and Aristotle both reacted to the egalitarian paradigm of democratic government and partnership and chose the more patriarchal model of an oligarchic form of government and obedience. Both of these men, and those that followed them, had a tremendous influence upon the writing of the early Christian texts.

Fiorenza has developed a feminist biblical hermeneutic which she calls a critical evaluative hermeneutic.

This hermeneutics not only challenges androcentric constructions of biblical history in language but also critically analyzes androcentric texts in order, first, to arrive at the lived ethos of early Christians that developed in interaction with its patriarchal cultural contexts and, second, to critically determine and evaluate its continuing structures of alienation and liberation. This evaluative feminist hermeneutics uses the critical analytical methods of historical biblical scholarship on the one hand and the theological goals of liberation theologies on the other, but focuses on the historical struggles of women in patriarchal culture and religion.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation (Boston: Beacon, 1984), 85

Fiorenza uses five guidelines in interpreting historical texts:

1. Historical texts have to be understood or evaluated in their historical setting, language, and form.
2. Since Biblical texts are rooted in a patriarchal culture and recorded from an androcentric point of view, a careful analysis from a feminist perspective might unearth traces of a genuine "her-story" of women in the Bible.
3. Since Biblical androcentric texts are recorded and told from a patriarchal point of view, it will be helpful to retell the androcentric Biblical stories from the woman's point of view.
4. Biblical texts are not only recorded but also translated and interpreted from a male perspective, since most exegetes are not aware of the feminist perspective.
5. Biblical revelation and truth about women are found, I would suggest, in those texts which transcend and criticize their patriarchal culture and religion.<sup>5</sup>

I believe these guidelines are helpful in raising the consciousness of women and men today. However, I do not believe they give us the total picture of the tension that existed in the Greco-Roman period between patriarchy and egalitarianism or how the biblical texts attempted to address that tension, or show how we, too, face a similar tension in our own culture.

I believe we have allowed our narrow understanding of the patronage system and the Greco-Roman period to color the way in which we have done biblical interpretation. We have a tendency to view the patronage system and the Greco-Roman world through our contemporary co-dependent lens. Co-dependency addresses the state of dis-ease within persons and within cultures and societies where the authentic self becomes unknown and

---

<sup>5</sup>Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, "Interpreting Patriarchal Traditions," The Liberating Word, ed. Letty M. Russell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 60-1.

hidden. Persons lose their sense of self-esteem and self-identity because their identity is imposed upon them from without through external norms and standards. This results in internal pain, distorted relationships and a loss of connectedness. Authority and power become hierarchal, and patriarchal marginalization and disenfranchisement occur to those without personal power--women, children, blacks, Asians, Hispanics and so forth. Consequently, we need to look again at the experience of women in the Greco-Roman period from a sociological perspective to understand the true context out of which the scriptures evolved, rather than assuming that they uphold a structure which we ought to perpetuate just because it is Christian. I believe feminine experience can shed light upon the truths hidden within the texts and enable us to formulate key questions to use in biblical interpretation for preaching.

Therefore, this project attempts to integrate material from the author's own experience as a woman in ministry working with other men and women and the experience of women in the socio-historical context of the Greco-Roman world. The methodology of the project attempts to take into account the social, political, economic, military and philosophical context of the Greco-Roman world, and by using a sociological method of exegesis, I hope these key questions will not only prove to be of value for biblical interpretation for preaching but will also speak to the experience of both men and women.

The focus of this project is limited to women's gender roles from Classical Greece to the first century, as determined by the household and its patronage system. I believe that by focusing upon this area we will be able to glean the truth about women's experience during the Hellenistic period. I do not intend to be responsible for detailed historical information from the

Greco-Roman period. Instead, this context is used as a foundation for understanding women's experience in Early Christianity. I intend to draw upon noted feminist writers in order to create new hermeneutical guidelines which, when applied to a biblical text, will more clearly reflect women's experience and thereby offer helpful insights for preaching. It is also hoped that these guidelines will help prevent the appropriation of first century texts as a reinforcement of rigid patriarchal paradigms which are hierarchal, male dominated and deny the self-identity of women through the establishment of male norms and standards.

Chapter 2 focuses upon honor and shame as a natural stage in human development, which, if distorted, can become co-dependency. This state of co-dependency colors the way in which we understand our culture and the cultural contexts of other cultures. Chapter 3 focuses upon the Greco-Roman World, highlighting its particular social, political, economic, military and philosophical context, and women's experience within that context. Because I believe Judaism evolved out of the Greco-Roman milieu, I have not included the Jewish experience within this section, although I will draw upon Jewish experience and the transmission of patriarchal paradigms and the honor and shame system within the context of the Jewish experience in chapter four. Chapter 4 endeavors to draw upon the insights of feminist writers in order to identify a number of key questions which, if asked of the text, would reveal a more complete picture of male and female experience and uncover the dynamics present within the particular textual *Sitz im Leben*. And finally, chapter 5 restates the problem and thesis in light of the foregoing research and endeavors to make final summaries, conclusions and practical applications.

A few terms which might be helpful to identify before continuing are: Feminine experience--which includes the experience of women in the Greco-Roman milieu, feminist writers, my experience of working with persons in ministry, and the reader's own personal experience that is touched as s/he reads the material articulated here and listens to the biblical text; patriarchy-- a social organization in which males have power and authority over women and children who are dependent upon them for their welfare; egalitarianism--the belief that all human beings have equal opportunities with respect to social, economic and political rights. (Paul addresses egalitarianism in Gal. 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Jesus Christ.")<sup>6</sup>

Within the Greco-Roman world, we find that the patriarchal household system drew upon two other systems: the patronage system with its various forms of patronage between patrons and clients, and the honor and shame system. Within the honor and shame system, male honor was obtained through the exercise of one's masculinity, i.e., courage, authority over one's family, willingness to defend country and personal reputation, and refusal to submit to any forms of humiliation. Male honor was essentially gleaned from the public sphere while female honor was best protected in the private sphere. The woman's role was to maintain herself in such a manner as not to bring shame upon herself, her husband, and family through the exercise of

---

<sup>6</sup>All references are to the Revised Standard Version unless specified.



chastity, discretion, shyness, restraint and timidity.<sup>7</sup> Basically, men were identified with honor; and women, with shame.

A final term for identification is personal power. Personal power refers to the ability and freedom to make choices concerning one's personal life and destiny. Such exercise of personal power brings with it a certain amount of honor or shame, depending upon how one exercises that authority. With these terms identified, let us turn to chapter 2, "Honor and Shame and Women's Gender Roles."

---

<sup>7</sup>Bruce J. Malina, The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 42-3.

## CHAPTER 2

### Honor and Shame and Women's Gender Roles

Honor and shame are two basic elements which have a tremendous impact upon our contemporary society. They influence the way in which we understand ourselves and others, and how we do biblical hermeneutics. In the award-winning film, Yentl, Barbra Streisand as Yentl is an intelligent, spirited and independent young woman who is forced to masquerade as a boy in order to pursue her thirst for knowledge. When Avigdor, Yentl's fellow student and best friend, learns of her masquerade as Ansel, he is horrified that she could have brought such shame upon their people, their beliefs and values, and so disrupt the very fabric of their society. He becomes enraged and grief stricken at her actions. It just was not done. Women did not study Torah. Torah was man's sphere. Women must stay at home, cook, sew, keep house, bear and raise children and read books only for pleasure. The rational, logical and analytical thinking was only for men.

Yes, this film was set in Eastern Europe around 1904, but even after eighty-five years the element of honor and shame still plays a significant role in our society today. Individuals climb the corporate ladder looking for recognition, power and more money. Athletes strive to attain the coveted title of Olympian and the highly prized gold medal. Men and women seek the title of Mr. and Miss Universe or just plain man or woman of the year. Youth strive to be homecoming king or queen. Actresses and actors strive for the Oscars. Writers seek the Nobel Peace Prize and so forth. We all want to be recognized for what we do well. On the other hand, we are ashamed when

we fail to measure up to a certain set of standards and often place the blame on someone or something else covering up the shame we feel inside.

According to Erik Erikson and his work on the eight stages of human development, honor and shame are a stage in the natural growth process of every child between the ages of two and four. It is at this time that the child develops a sense of "autonomy versus shame and doubt."<sup>1</sup> This stage is marked by the drawing of boundary lines between oneself, others, nature, time, space, God/gods and so forth. The lines are drawn out of a desire to know oneself and to situate oneself in a particular time and space.<sup>2</sup>

We draw lines in order to define our various experiences. Our enculturation process provides us with a particular social matrix which helps us to place various things in a certain sphere. We situate ourselves, others, and everything else with which we come into contact within particular boundaries. We learn that everyone and everything has a place, and persons and things out of place are abnormal.<sup>3</sup> At times, we are quick to call out-of-place people, deviants. We want to put them away in institutions where we hope they will be socialized according to our boundary lines and standards.

Three identifiable boundary lines or markers in our society, which were also present before the first century, are power, sexual status and religion. Power is defined as the ability to exercise control over the behavior of others. This does not mean physical force but is a symbol that conveys

---

<sup>1</sup>Robert Frager and James Fadiman, Personality and Personal Growth (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 150-51.

<sup>2</sup>Malina, 25.

<sup>3</sup>Malina, 26.

unpleasant and pleasant consequences based upon one's obedience or lack of. Sexual status (or roles) refers to a set of duties and rights within a particular social group: what one "ought" to do or what others "ought" to do to and for a person based upon their sex. These "ought to's" are derived from biological and sexual differentiation. Religion is the particular attitude and behavior one is expected to follow, relative to those who are in control. Honor, then, is the intersection of these three markers. It is the socially proper attitude and behavior with respect to power, sexual status and religion.<sup>4</sup>

Honor is the value of a person in his or her own eyes (that is, one's claim to worth) *plus* that person's value in the eyes of his or her social group. Honor is a claim to worth along with the social acknowledgment of worth. Society shares the sets of meanings and feelings bound up in the symbols of power, sexual status, and religion. Whom you can control is bound up with your male and female roles, which are bound up with where you stand on the status ladder of your group. When you lay claim to a certain status as embodied by your power and in your sexual role, you are claiming honor.<sup>5</sup>

For example, a minister especially a male senior minister, commands a certain amount of power due to his sexual role and status. If his parishioners and associate ministers obey him, he is honored or respected. But, if they disobey him or do not respect him, he is dishonored. Honor conveys a certain claim to worth and the social acknowledgment of that worth. The person is involved in a continual dialogue between what the norms of society are and how s/he is going to reproduce those norms in specific behavior.

---

<sup>4</sup>Malina, 27.

<sup>5</sup>Malina, 27.

A person constantly thinks about what he or she ought to do, about what is ideally acknowledged in the society as meaningful and valuable, and then examines his or her actions in the light of those societal norms and oughts. When a person perceives that his or her actions do in fact reproduce the ideals of society, he or she expects others in the group to acknowledge this fact, and what results is a grant of honor, a grant of reputation.<sup>6</sup>

To honor a particular person is to acknowledge that they have conformed to certain social "oughts" and "shoulds." They are entitled to be treated in an honorable manner.<sup>7</sup>

### Shame

The flip side of honor is shame. John Bradshaw in his book, Healing the Shame that Binds You, identifies two forms: "healthy" and "toxic or life-destroying." Healthy shame helps us recognize that we can not do everything by ourselves. We are finite human beings. We are not omnipotent. Healthy shame helps us to identify the boundaries of our limitations. We make mistakes. We fail, but we pick ourselves up and go on. Blushing is a natural manifestation of healthy shame that signals our inability to act in an unexpected situation in which we might feel caught off guard and exposed for whatever reason. Shyness is also a natural manifestation of healthy shame that protects us from being exposed or wounded by strangers. It is natural to be shy or cautious in new situations.

---

<sup>6</sup>Malina, 28.

<sup>7</sup>Malina, 28.

In other words, healthy shame allows us to recognize that we do not know it all and moves us to seek new information and learn new things.

On the other hand, toxic or life-destroying shame is experienced as an all-pervasive sense of being flawed and defective as a human being. It is no longer an emotion which signals our limitations but, instead, becomes a state of being in which one feels worthless and a failure as a human being. It is felt as an excruciating internal experience of unexpected exposure. As toxic shame is internalized, the person begins to feel divided against oneself and from others. S/He begins to disown him/herself as s/he covers up his/her shame in a facade of secrecy and darkness guarding against being exposed even to him/herself. The individual develops a false self in order to escape the pain. This false self may take the form of perfectionism or lackadaisicalness to the extent of being unkempt, a hero or a deviant and so forth. As the false self is being formed, the authentic self goes into hiding.

Compulsive and addictive behavior often is used to help the person keep out of touch with the authentic self. After many years of play-acting, defense mechanisms, compulsive and addictive behavior, one loses touch with the real self. The person no longer knows what s/he really feels. The person loses touch with his/her internal reality.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup>John Bradshaw, Healing the Shame that Binds You (Deerfield Beach, Fla.: Health Communications, 1988), 3-14.

### Co-dependency and Shame

Co-dependency is a contemporary term that addresses this issue of loss of self or the loss of one's internal reality. In co-dependency the person loses all sense of an inner life. Everything is found outside oneself: happiness, good feelings, self-worth, self-validation and so forth.

Co-dependency is a state of dis-ease whereby the authentic self is unknown or kept hidden, so that a sense of self . . . of mattering . . . of esteem and connectedness to others is distorted, creating pain and distorted relationships.<sup>9</sup>

When toxic shame is internalized, it lies at the core of co-dependency. The person becomes other-centered and dehumanized. As the false self works to cover and hide the real self, the person is thrown into a life of doing rather than being. Everything depends upon performance and achievement. However, "being requires no measurement; it is its own justification. Being is grounded in an inner life which grows in richness."<sup>10</sup>

### Conveyors of Toxic Shame

There are four main conveyors of toxic shame in our society: the family, the school, the culture and religion. The household or family is the basic unit within each of these social systems. If we apply our understanding of co-

---

<sup>9</sup>Bradshaw, 14.

<sup>10</sup>Bradshaw, 22-3.

dependency to each of these four systems, we find that each has the potential or indeed does have dysfunctional patterns of living and problem-solving. Such patterns of living and problem-solving are passed on from one generation to another through a certain set of rules.

Let us begin by identifying some of the common characteristics of co-dependency:

1. The person has difficulty identifying personal feelings. "Am I angry, sad, glad, etc.?"
2. The person has difficulty expressing his/her feelings. S/he has a concern about what others might think of him/her if s/he did express true feelings.
3. The person finds it difficult to form and maintain close relationships out of fear of rejection and pain.
4. The person is a perfectionist with respect to him/herself and others, demanding compliance to unrealistic demands.
5. The person is rigid and stuck in certain attitudes and behaviors that are unhealthy, but fears change and growth.
6. The person has difficulty adjusting to change.
7. The person feels overly responsible for other's feelings and behavior.
8. The person needs constant approval by others in order to feel good about oneself.
9. The person has difficulty making decisions.
10. The person feels powerless over their own life. They have no control.
11. The person has a basic sense of shame and low self-esteem over personal failures.



Oftentimes, co-dependent people or systems appear to be strong, self-sufficient and in control on the outside, but this is only a facade in reality. The dysfunctional system is kept in balance by certain identifiable rules.<sup>11</sup>

### The Family and Household Rules

Within the family system we can identify a number of the rules that keep persons bound to this dysfunctional and co-dependent system. First, there is the wielding of power which is often hierarchical and is a cover up for shame. The one at the top can yell at everyone down the line and nobody can yell at him. Many climb the corporate ladder so that no one can yell at them or make them feel ashamed anymore. Instead, they are in a position of control over everyone else. There is no one above them to place them in a position of being shamed or blamed. They have control of all interactions, feelings and personal behavior at all times.<sup>12</sup>

Secondly, it is not okay to talk about problems. Feelings, needs and wants are not talked about but are hidden, suppressed and repressed from consciousness. Children learn from their parents that family problems are not aired outside the household. They watch their parents glaring at each other, refusing to talk as the tension mounts. From this behavior, children learn to cover up their own problems and deny they exist. This denial and cover up can lead to psychosomatic illnesses as tension is internalized.

---

<sup>11</sup>Robert Subby and John Friel, Co-Dependency and Family Rules (Pompano Beach, Fla.: Health Communications, n.d.), 4-5.

<sup>12</sup>Bradshaw, 39.

Thirdly, feelings are not expressed openly. Americans are known for being inhibitors of their emotions. We want to be known for being rational, clever, practical and able to solve our own problems without help. Children learn at an early age to repress their feelings, especially in a culture that sings the tune "big boys don't cry" or "be quiet or I'll give you something to cry about."

Fourth, triangulation is the name of the game. Do not communicate directly. Use a messenger to convey one's thoughts and feelings to others. Collude with another against a third person. Children often get caught in the middle of this triangle and oftentimes receive the anger of the parent who is to receive the message carried by the child. Children learn that direct confrontation and conflict are bad and usually end up becoming victims of other's inability to confront.

Fifth, perfectionism is revealed in unrealistic expectations: be strong, good, right, perfect. Individuals begin to believe that there is only one right way. We become disappointed when individuals do not meet our unrealistic expectations and standards.<sup>13</sup> Perfectionism denies the expression of five personal freedoms of every individual: "the power to perceive; to think and interpret; to feel; to want and choose; and the power to imagine."<sup>14</sup> The shame-based system says one should think, feel, desire or imagine according to the perfectionist's standards or those of the one who is in control.

Sixth, the rule "don't be selfish" teaches persons that it is not all right to get one's needs met. Others' needs come first. In co-dependent situations,

---

<sup>13</sup>Subby and Friel, 6-9.

<sup>14</sup>Bradshaw, 40.

the person can only feel good about themselves when caring for others. The person's self-esteem is dependent upon caretaking. As a result, self-worth is found outside oneself. The more the person cares for others, the less chance there is to have his/her own needs met. The person becomes resentful of those whom they care for because they do not recognize his/her needs.

Seventh, unreliability - "do as I say. . . not as I do." This phrase has been overused by many parents. It teaches children that they will not be disappointed if they do not trust their parents or anyone else. Children learn to manipulate others in order to get their need for validation and love met. They tell others what they think they want to hear, or do what they think they want them to do, denying who they really are. The fear they harbor in not telling the truth is a fear of rejection and lack of affection.

Eighth, it is not okay to play. Children in co-dependent families are put under pressure to grow up. The world is a serious place. Doing is primary. What you do determines whether you are unloveable, boring, stupid, ugly and wrong. As a result, the co-dependent is constantly striving to feel good about him/herself through doing. There is no time for spontaneity and play because s/he is too busy overachieving in order to feel good about him/herself.

Ninth, it is important not to make mistakes because mistakes reveal the flawed and vulnerable self. Acknowledgment of mistakes opens one up to scrutiny. Therefore, persons learn to cover up their mistakes and blame others. Or they turn the blame upon themselves as a defensive cover up for shame. Often blame is used to maintain a system when control has broken down.

Tenth, the person works to maintain the status quo. Change is threatening to the system. Thus, everyone must try not to rock the boat. The above rules keep persons locked into a system wherein they feel powerless to change or escape.<sup>15</sup> The system remains rigid and closed. All the participants become enmeshed and frozen in its fabric, unable to escape. Defense mechanisms become automatic and unconscious as they cover up the pain and suffering of shame through: denial, idealization of authority figures, repression and dissociation of emotions, projection, transference, displacement, depersonalization, etc. As a result, we cannot heal what we no longer feel or identify. The shame gets passed on from one generation to the next.<sup>16</sup>

### The School

The educational system continues to cement the internalization process of shame begun in the family system. In school, the child is measured against the perfect score of 100. If the child does not measure up, s/he is placed upon a descending scale which ends in failure. Perfectionism denies healthy shame. It assumes that the child can be perfect. It denies the fact that it is natural to make mistakes and that mistakes will be made many times throughout one's life time. Perfectionism also takes a negative norm or standard and absolutizes it for all people. Everything is compared and judged by that particular standard.

---

<sup>15</sup>Subby and Friel, 10-12.

<sup>16</sup>Bradshaw, 32.

Perfectionism also leads a person to overachieve. Overachievement and perfectionism are two leading coverups for toxic shame that bind individuals to a dysfunctional system. The superachiever tries to prove that s/he is okay on the outside in order to prove that s/he is not flawed and defective on the inside. Perfectionism encourages cheating, competition and the measurement of one's intelligence on a shame-based scale which upholds only one side of the brain as valuable -- the logical, rational, analytical left side--rather than including the emotional, intuitive and creative right side of the brain as well.<sup>17</sup>

### The Culture

The cultural system reinforces what is learned in the school system and vice versa. Orderliness and obedience are perpetuated in a rigid "master-slave" system of inequality. Vitality, spontaneity, inner freedom, inner independence and critical judgment are repressed while meekness, unselfishness, concern for others and being law-abiding citizens are upheld as descriptive of a healthy culture. Such abandonment of the inner self leads to abuse. Our contemporary culture is seriously affected by the increasing rise in the incidence of physical, sexual and substance abuse. Individuals use abusive means to cover up the pain and suffering of toxic shame. If persons are not sedating themselves with various substances, then they are feverishly involved in overactivity and compulsive lifestyles. Statistics are unavailable on the number of workaholics in our society. But, few people in

---

<sup>17</sup>Bradshaw, 61-2.

our society know the quietness, peace and rest of inner solitude. They are too busy getting ahead, making more money and striving for success. What is important is keeping one's mind off the pain and suffering of toxic shame through overactivity.

In addition, shame-based cultures also transmit rigid sex roles. Females are identified with the right side of the brain--emotional, vulnerable and fragile. They are the nurturers, caretakers and peacemakers of our households. Males, on the other hand, are identified with the left side of the brain--rational, logical, analytical and rugged. They are "macho," with muscles bulging out everywhere, ready to do battle for God and country. The tragedy of such rigidly defined sex roles is that males are ashamed to embrace the emotional, vulnerable and nurturing side of their being. And, women are berated for being assertive in actualizing their left brain qualities.

Furthermore, our contemporary culture does not deal with its sexuality very well. The Miss America Pageant is a good example of the transmission of the perfect or ideal female who is very shapely with the right size breasts, buttock and petite waistline. She must be able to speak well, but intelligence is not a must. Instead, the value of persons is often measured by the size of breasts and penises. Men are concerned about whether their penises are large enough and women, whether their breasts meet male standards. The focus is eschewed. Such a focus can only lead to toxic shame, a feeling of being flawed and defective, when value is placed upon measurement.

Emotion is another element which is repressed in our culture. Emotion is not accepted in many work places. Persons are asked to keep their feelings to themselves and not rock the boat. However, this hiding and repressing of

emotions, feelings, does not end here.<sup>18</sup> Religious systems also repress and hide emotions.

### Religion

Sexual feelings and anger are two emotions which are repressed and denied in many religious systems. The suppression and repression of sexual feelings oftentimes erupts in the form of incest, sexual abuse, indecent liberties and so forth on the part of all ages and genders. In the court system, certain religious sects are known for their high incidence of sexual abuse as the result of such repression.

Many religious denominations internalize shame through their concept of original sin. This concept is used to affirm the fallen, flawed, defective and wretchedness of humankind. Hymns such as "Amazing grace! how sweet the sound That saved a wretch like me!" reinforce the shame. And, punitive child-rearing practices strive to break the unruly will of the child and its natural inclination toward evil. Humankind is shame-based to the core, unable to save itself.

Although, this is not true of all religious denominations. Some denominations affirm the fact that persons play a key role in the grace of God. The grace of God is received when a person is willing to accept it by faith. Therefore, his/her will must be willing to accept the grace offered. The person's will is important in the ongoing sanctification process as the person strives to become more whole. Thus, a person's will plays an

---

<sup>18</sup>Bradshaw, 67-70.

important part in the actualization of God's grace within persons and within the world.

Even so, rigid and authoritarian religious systems still wield their power of control over the lives of others through the use of rigid rules and absolutes drawn out of context from the Bible. The religious system transmits its standards of perfectionism through moral "shoulds," "oughts," and "musts." These standards are justified by literal biblical interpretations taken out of context and used to shame persons into compliance to behavioral righteousness and holiness. The rules dictate how the person should, ought, and must talk, dress, walk and behave. And, any departure from this behavior is deemed sinful.

Religion can also be used to cover up toxic shame. Worship, fasting, prayer, meditation, service for and to others, sacramental rituals, speaking in tongues, slain in the Holy Spirit, quoting scripture and so forth can be used as a means to alter one's mood and make one feel righteous and holy. If a person is shame-based such rituals can be very rewarding.<sup>19</sup>

The major texts often used as absolute standards of behavior, taken out of context and used to control the lives of persons, are as follows:

1 Corinthians 7:1-5 reinforces the rigidity in expressing emotions toward others of the opposite sex. It also reinforces the idea that the woman's body belongs to the husband to use as he sees fit, even to the extent of abuse.

1 Peter 2:11-3:7 reinforces the continued suppression and repression of emotions: the idea of the master and slave, with its obedience and submission to those in authority over you. Women are portrayed as the

---

<sup>19</sup>Bradshaw, 64-6.



weaker sex, with Christ, a male, as the perfect example. If a wife wants to win her husband over, she must do so by submissive, reverent and chaste behavior, having a gentle and quiet spirit at all times.

1 Corinthians 11:2-16, Ephesians 5:21-6:9, Colossians 3:18-4:1, and Titus 2:2-10 reinforce the man as the head of the household, with control over the woman. The role of the wife is to be submissive to her husband, always striving to be perfect in every way.

1 Timothy 2:8-15 reinforces "proper" modest attire for women and good deeds of caring for others. And again, women are to be submissive to those in authority over them, especially men. Women are commanded not to teach men because it was a woman who first caused man to sin. As a result, women can be saved only through childbearing, holiness and modesty in living.

1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 reinforces the silence of women in the church, as subordinates. Men have the leadership roles and control in the church.

### Women's Gender Roles and an Honor/Shame System

In a male dominated patriarchal and shame-based society, women are socialized as inadequate, inferior, weak, illogical, irrational, passive and reactive. Women learn that they are not in control of their lives. Instead, they are powerless and helpless, and control is in the hands of others.

Once women are operating from a belief of helplessness the perception becomes reality and they become passive,

submissive, helpless. They allow things that appear to them to be out of their control actually to get out of their control.<sup>20</sup>

Personal worth, survival and autonomy no longer depend upon effective and creative responses to life situations, but rather upon physical beauty and appeal to men.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, women socialized as helpless victims of an abusive society often marry with the intent that a man will protect and defend them from abuse, only to find themselves victimized again.

In a marriage, the husband often has the legal right to decide where the family lives, restricting the woman's freedom of movement. Power in marriage is also related to economic and social status, as men usually have higher-paying jobs and more status. As a result of their position, men have greater decision-making power and can engage in physical and psychological "one-upmanship." Men are also stronger physically which can lead to masculine power and confidence over women.

Cultural conditions, marriage laws, economic realities, physical inferiority--all these teach women that they have no direct control over the circumstances of their lives.<sup>22</sup>

Even recent legislative efforts have tried to control the lives of women through restrictions placed upon abortions. This is a good example of men making decisions for women that affect the lives of women and not men

---

<sup>20</sup>Lenore E. Walker, The Battered Woman (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 47.

<sup>21</sup>Walker, 51.

<sup>22</sup>Walker, 52.

directly. A woman's civil right to make decisions with regard to her own body is violated when men take such action.

Anne Wilson Schaef in her book, When Society Becomes An Addict, points out that women are socialized to be externally referented. The male patriarchal system tells them what to do, think and feel. Women are defined as inferior at birth and in need of a man to intervene for them. If women can attach themselves to a man, they can then feel validated, approved and absolved from the original sin of being born a female. As a result, women buy into the addictive shame-based system.<sup>23</sup> Men make the decisions, deal with the outside world, earn the money and determine how it will be spent. Women are dependent upon men to cope with the world and provide for their livelihood. They believe they cannot exist in the world without men.

However, on the other hand, in the private sphere of the home, the roles are reversed. The woman prepares and serves his food, sees that he is clothed, meets his sexual needs, takes care of his social needs and even protects him from his own children when he needs peace and quiet. In other words, he is physically and emotionally dependent on her. Therefore, each partner encourages the other's dependency out of fear of being abandoned and alone. Each is reluctant to act independently out of fear of threatening the stability of the relationship.

Shame-based addictive relationships leave persons powerless, take control of their lives, and leave them in a state of non-being. Such relationships cause persons to do and think things that are inconsistent with

---

<sup>23</sup>Anne Wilson Schaef, When Society Becomes an Addict (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 7-9.

their personal values and lead them to become progressively more compulsive and obsessive.

A sure sign of an addiction is the sudden need to deceive ourselves and others--to lie, deny and cover up. An addiction keeps us unaware of what is going on inside us. We do not have to deal with our anger, pain, depression, confusion or even our joy and love, because we do not feel them, or we feel them only vaguely. We stop relying on our confused perceptions to tell us what we know and sense.<sup>24</sup>

When a person or society becomes confused, it is more controllable. Politicians confuse the public through innuendos, veiled references, and out and out lies instead of speaking clearly and truthfully. Confusion also keeps persons ignorant. Professional language is often used to keep the lay person from understanding. It also prevents them from taking responsibility for their own lives. The average lay person is often too busy spending time and energy trying to figure out what is going on to have enough energy left over to act responsibly. Consequently, persons stay stuck in the addictive shame-based system.<sup>25</sup>

Other excellent resources for further study in the area of shame-based systems and co-dependency are the following: Anne Wilson Schaef, Co-Dependence, Misunderstood-Mistreated; Virginia Satir, Conjoint Family Therapy: Your Many Faces; and Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse, Another Chance: Hope and Health for the Alcoholic Family.

---

<sup>24</sup>Schaef, 18.

<sup>25</sup>Schaef, 65-6.

Statistics reveal that our contemporary society has become co-dependent. It has internalized toxic shame, sedated the pain with chemical substances and overactivity, and looks without for answers to its problems of physical, sexual, emotional and substance abuse, crime and so forth. Our male-dominated patriarchal society has tried to take control of our particular context and, as a result, has taken the control out of individual hands and ended up perpetuating a system that teaches women to be powerless and that control is in the hands of men. Those who live in our streets also experience a sense of powerlessness as they learn that control is in the hands of those who have power over others.

A male-dominated patriarchal culture imposes its addictive and co-dependent mind-set upon everything it reads, including the Second Testament, using the patronage system and household paradigms as prescriptions for how power should be distributed; gender roles assigned; and beliefs, attitudes and behaviors upheld as ideals for all to emulate in order to be good citizens or Christian people. This in turn leads to the affirmation and perpetuation of a shame-based system that enculturates women to be co-dependent.

At this point, we need to look at three things: What exactly was the social, political, economic, religious and military milieu of the Greco-Roman world out of which the Second Testament evolved? How did the household and its patronage system operate for both men and women in the Greco-Roman world? And, what personal power was accessible to women in the Greco-Roman context?

### CHAPTER 3

#### Power and Women's Gender Roles in the Greco-Roman Milieu

As we approach the subject of women's gender roles in the Greco-Roman milieu and their sense of personal power or powerlessness within the household structure, we need to recognize that the socio-political, economic, military and religious milieu of Greece and Rome greatly affected the household and its patronage system and, in turn, women's gender roles in Classical Greece, Hellenistic, Roman Republic and Imperial Roman eras. Secondly, it is important to remember that the biblical text, which we have, evolved out of the Greco-Roman milieu. Consequently, we need to look at the household with its patronage system and women's gender roles in these various contexts in order to understand the role women played and their sense of personal power or control over their lives in a constantly changing climate.

The methodology used is a socio-historical analysis of historical writings, especially Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, Ischomachus' discourse on the household and the work of Cassius Dio Cocceianus, a Roman historian and others as footnoted.

Before the Greek communities began to occupy the southern part of the Balkan peninsula, becoming more of a settled agrarian community, they were a nomadic people. Marriage consisted of not one relationship with one man but many relationships with many men. In these relationships, the woman had a choice over who would be the father of her child. The choice was not made for her. The men devoted themselves to hunting while the women

devoted themselves to the raising of children, taming of wild beasts, gathering of "health-giving plants" and supervising the resources within the household. Because women dealt so closely with nature and learned what brought life and what brought death, they fixed the taboos by which the tribe lived. As a result, women were held in high esteem. They earned the right and were acknowledged as knowledgeable in that area based on experience. Any power which women had as a result of their sexual status and religious taboos was a power with the male species rather than a power over anyone.<sup>1</sup>

### The Classical Greek City-State

However, as the Greek communities began to occupy the Balkan peninsula, the power accessible to women changed, as did their gender roles. Males were identified more and more with the public sphere and females with the private sphere.<sup>2</sup> The household became the basic identifying unit of social and economic activity and gender roles. This paradigm of the household and its patronage system became a model for the exercise of power and an avenue through which honor could be obtained in the Classical Greek city-states.

The ideal patronage system was structured on a system of reciprocal relationships involving the mutually beneficial exchange of goods and services. At its core was the element of trust between patrons and clients

---

<sup>1</sup>Andre' Bonnard, Greek Civilization (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 126.

<sup>2</sup>Bonnard, 126.

which was built into the social order and permeated these relationships.<sup>3</sup> The household represented the private domain, consisting of family members, business clients, slaves, and free-men working on the landed estates. The role of the wife within this domain was to oversee its social and economic management. The social aspects included the rearing of children for their respective roles within the city-state, and the education, training and discipline of slaves. (Male children were reared for their place in public life, and female children were reared to assume their roles in consolidating the family's social and political alliances through marriage. Marriages between two families often were used to reconcile families. In this process, women played a major role.<sup>4</sup>) The economic aspects of the household included the management of the estate, its property, stores and personnel, both slave and free. The economic functions of the household included production of food and clothing for distribution within the household, and the production of agricultural products and textiles for sale at the market place.

The public domain of the polis was the sphere in which the men participated. It was the domain of public discourse, voting, holding offices, making speeches and debating in public places. These public places included the marketplace, the stoa, covered porticoes along major streets, the building or areas which housed the assembly, the council and the various

---

<sup>3</sup>S. N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger, Patrons, Clients and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), 29.

<sup>4</sup>Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, "Exit Atossa: Images of Women in Greek Historiography on Persia," Images of Women in Antiquity, eds. Averil Cameron and Amelie Kuhrt (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1983), 29-30.



magistrates, the law-courts, the gymnasium and the theatre. Young men were educated and trained to perform in this sphere of public discourse where the function was to secure the common good for all.<sup>5</sup>

However, the clear definition of gender roles within the patronage system was blurred by the resulting socio-political, economic, military and religious climate. During the Classical period, the city-states were in a chronic state of civil war between those who favored an oligarchy and those who favored a more democratic form of government.<sup>6</sup>

The city-state of Sparta exemplified the oligarchic form of government in which the rich exploited the masses. The free-born citizens of the state were a band of conquerors who had overt and coercive power over the poor, the slaves, children and women. This Spartan model accentuated military virtue and corporate life. Greek citizens were soldiers and politicians first, devoting their lives entirely to the state and its public affairs.<sup>7</sup> Family life, progeny and the rearing of children were controlled and regulated by the state. Wherein children were bred for two qualities: military skill and absolute obedience. These children lived in barracks and were barred from other vocational interests or activities.<sup>8</sup> Women were trained along with men in

---

<sup>5</sup>Karen Jo Torjesen, "Public Roles, Domestic Virtues: The Controversies over Women's Leadership," Sex, Sin and Woman: Social Histories of Theological Ideas, (Harper & Row, forthcoming).

<sup>6</sup>G. Lowes Dickinson, The Greek View of Life (London: Methuen, 1904), 81.

<sup>7</sup>Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, The Collected Dialogues of Plato including the Letters (New York: Bollingin Foundation, 1961), 122.

<sup>8</sup>Hamilton and Cairns, 99; M. I. Finley, The Ancient Greeks (New York: Viking, 1963), 65.

the gymnasium.<sup>9</sup> It was believed that physical exercise was important to the performance of motherhood and the bearing of healthy children for the state.<sup>10</sup> Women also were eligible for official appointments after the age of forty and for military employments after giving birth to their children and up to the age of fifty. They were taught to fight in armour and bear arms in case of foreign invasion. In this way, they would be able to protect the children and the city.<sup>11</sup>

Education and training in obedience and military skill were provided by the state, and a set of laws tried to prevent economic inequality. Every free-born male citizen was given a landed estate which was, in turn, cultivated by free-men who paid a yearly rent. The productive class who worked the land, however, was seen as inferior, along with women and children, because they lacked political rights. This Spartan system was economically and socially xenophobic because it remained closed to outside influence and the importation of goods.<sup>12</sup>

Even though Sparta had the greatest Greek military force on land, her xenophobic society resulted in a steady decrease in population. She stubbornly refused to recruit new citizens even when the need for manpower became desperate. Consequently, the property system broke down, and increasing numbers of Spartans lost their land allotments and

---

<sup>9</sup>Dickinson, 96-7.

<sup>10</sup>Dickinson, 96-7.

<sup>11</sup>Hamilton and Cairns, 1360, 1384.

<sup>12</sup>Hamilton and Cairns, 99.

status as Spartan citizens.<sup>13</sup> In spite of the consequences, Sparta still represented one side of Greek nature, that of discipline and law, which many admired.<sup>14</sup>

Athens, on the other hand, represented the other side of Greek nature: the capacity for rich and spontaneous individual development. With its democratic form of government, it tended to be much more egalitarian. Athenian military pursuits at sea brought many more slaves, artisans and traders into the city-state of Athens than into other city-states. Politically, Athenian citizens, for the most part, had a trade. Traders, artisans, peasants, businessmen or sailors were equal with the aristocrats. Free citizens included persons of every rank with no political distinctions. They all, from the lowest to the highest, had the right to speak and to vote in the assembly, which was the ultimate form of authority; all were eligible for every administrative office; and all took their turns as jurors in the law-courts. Even distinctions of ability were levelled by the practice of filling offices, except the highest, by lot. The constitution of Athens was one of political equality imposed upon social inequality.<sup>15</sup>

Although slaves made up more than half of the population and were not free, they viewed the Athenian government as an oligarchy. Slaves, by the nature of their position, had no political rights. They were employed at the

---

<sup>13</sup>Finley, 67.

<sup>14</sup>Dickinson, 103.

<sup>15</sup>Dickinson, 106-7.

lower levels of production and did a greater part of the household work.<sup>16</sup> However, slaves did have some freedom and individuality. They were protected by law from excessive abuses from their masters, unlike other city-states, and were also allowed to dress like other citizens. By general appearance, they could not be distinguished from citizens. They were also permitted freedom of speech and could acquire a fortune and live in ease and luxury. In this way, slavery was made as democratic as possible in Athens.<sup>17</sup>

Xenophon, an Athenian country gentleman, soldier, and historian who admired the Spartan polis, disclosed in his writings the tension present in the Classical Greek city-states between these two paradigms which were representative of the two sides of Greek nature--discipline and law, on the one hand, and the rich and spontaneous individual development of individuals, on the other.<sup>18</sup> It is in this context that light is shed upon the hidden power present in the female gender role in the private sphere of the household. Women's power and influence were much more covert and persuasive in contrast to the overt and coercive power of the Greek free-born male citizens who had to prove their ability to rule or command authority in the public sphere by their ability to assert their authority over slaves, women, children and the poor. The art of ruling or commanding dealt with the maintenance and increase of the family wealth and the passing on

---

<sup>16</sup>Bonnard, 120,122.

<sup>17</sup>Dickinson, 110.

<sup>18</sup>Carlton J. H. Hayes, Ancient Civilizations (New York: Macmillan, 1983), 241.

of that wealth to one's heirs. Therefore, every effort was made to maintain and increase the family wealth which also increased the wealth of the city.<sup>19</sup>

In the Spartan model of the household, the wife was to be the first slave and a model of obedience and loyalty to the husband and to the state. In the Athenian model of the household, the focus was more upon the ideal of political equality and partnership in a climate of social inequality. The husband and wife relationship was a shared partnership as co-workers. Trust was an important element in this partnership and the patronage system which extended to the husband and wife relationship. The husband established a relationship with his wife in which he was able to train and guide her in the management of the household and then leave it in her care since she was the key figure in its management. Moreover, the first role of the wife and mistress of the house was to be a good partner, with the common goal of maintaining the resources in good condition and increasing their wealth through just means. If the husband had trained his wife well, he could leave the house in her care while he worked in the field, attended to public affairs of the state, or went to sea as a sailor for extended periods of time. In this respect, the roles between the husband and wife were complementary. The man brought the needed resources into the house and the woman managed its expenditure.<sup>20</sup>

Ischomachus saw this relationship with his wife as rounding out each other's deficiencies. (In our contemporary understanding, we would say that

---

<sup>19</sup>Michel Foucault, The Use of Pleasure (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 152-3.

<sup>20</sup>Foucault, 156-7.

together they were able to fulfill their total responsibilities in partnership more efficiently than separately.) Ischomachus adds that if his wife performs her functions well, she could become the ruling partner and be held in honor as the guardian of her children and the stewardess of her husband's goods, in the same manner that a man was able to gain respect and honor for managing his household and public affairs well.

In Xenophon's view, the privileged position and status of the wife could never be lost as long as she was trustworthy. Therefore, for Xenophon, the inferior status of women almost disappears. Even though, in reality, the inferior status of women was an integral part of Greek culture and thinking. Xenophon tries to focus more upon the complementary nature of husband and wife and how they can benefit each other in this mutual exchange of goods and services.<sup>21</sup>

As the key figure in the management of the household, overseeing all the work, supervising the spinning, weaving, making of clothes, training of the new servants and nursing the sick, the wife's leadership was a leadership by example and by articulation. The power which she exercised was a persuasive power of servant leadership as she helped in the activities of the household, working side-by-side with the servants.<sup>22</sup> In this position as servant and leader, she was able to hear, see and know things not otherwise known, and, with her intuitive insight, was able to gain the trust of others. This kind of power was not overt or coercive, but had a tremendous impact upon others. It is this covert and persuasive power that creates

---

<sup>21</sup>Foucault, 162-3; Dickinson, 164.

<sup>22</sup>Edith Hamilton, The Greek Way (New York: Norton, 1942), 208-9.

opportunities and alternatives so that individuals may choose to build autonomy as they are free to express themselves individually.<sup>23</sup>

The landowners' existence and the patronage system favored friendships by providing opportunities to show generosity, hospitality and acts of benevolence toward other citizens.<sup>24</sup> This, therefore, brought people into the household where hospitality could be shown. If we read between the lines, we might find that while the husband entertained the men, the wife often entertained the wives. Women were also allowed to attend the temple and other women's groups, thus, building a web of interconnected relationships through which valuable information could be obtained socially, politically, economically and militarily. For the husband, the wife became an avenue through which many more connections could be made that might not otherwise be accessible through his contacts only, ending up being beneficial for both.

---

<sup>23</sup>Robert K. Greenleaf, Servant Leadership (New York: Paulist, 1977), 41-2. (It is not my intent to deny the reality that both men and women utilize patriarchal, dominating power which can be overt and coercive, and covert, persuasive, partnership power to attain desired ends. We live in a world in which overt, coercive means are often male-identified and seen as good and covert; persuasive means are female-identified and seen as manipulative. It is my intent to reveal how covert and persuasive power was recognized and used effectively by women in the Greco-Roman world. Covert and persuasive power was also effective within the patronage system itself.)

<sup>24</sup>Foucault, 153.

### The Hellenistic World

The ideals of the Classical Greek city-states and culture spread across the land as they were carried by soldiers and sailors alike to different areas and were accepted as a workable paradigm in the early Hellenistic period. Soldiers and sailors became professionals and separated from the politics of the polis. Due to the agrarian crisis and the low level of technology, the poor Greek soil could no longer maintain a living or provide the financial resources to pay sailors over long periods of time at sea. Therefore, expansion was the only solution. However, expansion brought with it a lack of patriotism within the city-states.

The land was also in a constant state of war, as first Philip and then Alexander of Macedonia took over control, and later, Ptolemy and the Romans. The Hellenistic political history was plagued with unceasing warfare in an effort to increase territory at the expense of others. By the second century B.C., the city-states were weakened to such an extent that they could not resist the movement of Rome to take over control of the Hellenistic world.<sup>25</sup>

Since the armies of Macedonia and Greece had spent half a century fighting abroad, many settled in the conquered areas where they formed a new governing class with other immigrants from Greece. On the whole, the Greeks were very tolerant and respected the national traditions and cultures

---

<sup>25</sup>Finley, 148-49.



of the people they conquered.<sup>26</sup> However, they held the wealth and power, while the natives remained as the subordinated working class. As a result, a large middle class of "soldier-settlers" was created. These men held land from the king in return for their military service, and the land could be passed on to their descendants.<sup>27</sup>

The Hellenistic cities became administrative centers rather than being the center of political organization. They functioned for the purpose of performing various community services connected with food and water supply, or with religion and education. The administrative centers were also responsible for tax collection, the administration of justice and other tasks assigned to them by the king. Although everyone was a subject of the king in the cities with respect to local affairs, the status of citizenship was highly prized as if the old days still survived. The gymnasium became the center focus of Greek city life rather than the assembly and the council chamber. The cities lost their autonomy and initiative in the decisive fields of legislation and financial policy. Judicial decisions were subject to the king's jurisdiction, and foreign affairs were entirely in his hands.<sup>28</sup>

Until the Romans took over in the middle of the second century B.C.E., the old Greek polis continued, but in a "watered down" and "modified" version. The polis had lost its all-embracing community quality. No longer was it the center of man's spiritual life. Instead, each individual had to find his own

---

<sup>26</sup>Sancisi-Weerdenburg, 21.

<sup>27</sup>Finley, 149.

<sup>28</sup>Finley, 151.

salvation through direct communication with the divine.<sup>29</sup> The household under these conditions remained virtually the same as in the classical period but in a modified form.

It is out of this context that we hear the voices of Isocrates, Plato and Aristotle. These men had a tremendous influence upon the people of the newly hellenized world. Plato's textbooks were the sourcebooks for Greek paradigms learned by the hellenized people.<sup>30</sup> In the late fourth century B.C.E., Plato found the Athenians to be disappointing and discouraging. Greek citizens, who were bred for public office, temperance and a concern for all people, were now caught up in self-interest, greed, competition, excessive liberties and the quest for power. Athenian democracy was failing. It was becoming imperialistic and Plato sought to change the prevailing trend by founding a school whose aim it was to bring about a new order. Plato's ideal was the Spartan paradigm. He believed that the Athenians needed good and wise political leaders who would put forth the aim of the good life as that of working for the good of the state.<sup>31</sup>

Consequently, Plato developed a moral code which sought to unite religious and civic life at all levels. He wanted to provide a social foundation which would promote concern for individual destiny. His moral code had far

---

<sup>29</sup>Finley, 151, 154.

<sup>30</sup>Moses Hadas, Hellenistic Culture (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1959), 22, 75.

<sup>31</sup>Hamilton, The Greek Way, 197-198; Edith Hamilton, The Echo of Greece (New York: Norton, 1957), 72-3, 86.

reaching influence in the Hellenistic and early Christian world.<sup>32</sup> Plato's concern was to identify gender roles which would benefit the state and provide for future citizens of the state. Plato used three areas to persuade persons to live out their respective roles: concern for one's reputation (public opinion), control over internal and external enemies, and the honor-shame system. Honor and shame dealt with the relationship between the individual and himself and his relationship to the city not his relationship with other persons. He believed that obedience to the state and individual success in these areas would bring success to the state.<sup>33</sup> Plato also proposed that self-control, courage and justice were the same for both men and women.<sup>34</sup>

Aristotle's interest in science added to Plato's work. He saw the partnership between men and women as natural and nonegalitarian. In his mind, a man must govern his wife. The relationship between husband and wife was an aristocracy. Each had their own share of authority, a role to play and a function based upon their own merit and worth. The wife shared that authority which was suited to her part in their relationship, the management of the household. The man exercised his authority in the public sphere. Thus, men and women exercised their authority within certain spheres. The marriage bond had an element of political justice to it as the

---

<sup>32</sup>Hadas, 75.

<sup>33</sup>Foucault, 167-70.

<sup>34</sup>Mary R. Lefkowitz, "Influential Women," Images of Women in Antiquity, eds. Averil Cameron and Amelie Kuhrt (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1983), 57.

husband must insure that the wife's position and status was not threatened. "As far as the husband's sexual relations are concerned, anything that threatens the privileged position of the wife in the aristocratic government of the household also compromises the necessary and essential justice of that government."<sup>35</sup> Whereas Xenophon made the husband's sexual moderation the result of a wise master of the household, Aristotle brings in the element of justice in the governing of human relations.

It is in the context of unequal distribution of powers and functions that the husband has to privilege his wife; and it is through a voluntary attitude--based on interest and wisdom--that he will be able, as one who knows how to manage an aristocratic authority, to judge what is owing to each individual."<sup>36</sup>

Isocrates in his dissertation on the lifestyle of an autocrat adds to the above the importance of respecting the associations one forms with others. If good order reigns within a monarch's household, then order would prevail in his government. A monarch was to rule by example in the areas of moderation and justice and, therefore, have an influence upon others.<sup>37</sup>

However, a real tension existed between Plato and Aristotle in the area of the sexes, even within a democracy. Aristotle gave a straightforward justification for the inequality of the sexes. He argued that only adult males could be fully rational and capable of ruling. Females possessed the rational principle but it was defective and not developed. Therefore, it was natural

---

<sup>35</sup>Foucault, 175-9.

<sup>36</sup>Foucault, 180.

<sup>37</sup>Foucault, 170-4.

for the male to rule the female. He also believed that it was beneficial for the woman to be ruled by the man so that she could engage in "womanly" activities without worry.

Essentially, Aristotle was critical of Plato's utopian society outlined in his Republic. The Republic was an implicit rejection of the Athenian society. In this work Plato reduces the asymmetry between the sexes. "The male begets and the female bears offspring, but otherwise the capabilities of both sexes are nearly equal. The soul has no sex. Anyone--woman or man--with the proper qualifications will be admitted into the public sphere to defend and govern the commonwealth."<sup>38</sup>

The Neopythagorean philosophers in Italy in the third or second century B.C.E. carried on Aristotle's thinking. They saw women's capacity to govern as less than men's. "I agree that men should be generals and city officials and politicians, and women should keep house and stay inside and receive and take care of their husbands."<sup>39</sup> The thinking was that women could not rule as governors unless they acted in conjunction with a man.

However, Hellenistic queens were the first examples of truly independent women as they organized court intrigues, directed the strategy of naval and land battles and made decisions affecting governmental policy, although all of this was done with the titular presence of a man.<sup>40</sup> Even so, co-ruling and

---

<sup>38</sup>Sarah B. Pomeroy, Women in Hellenistic Egypt (New York: Schocken, 1984), xvii.

<sup>39</sup>Lefkowitz, 57.

<sup>40</sup>Lefkowitz, 57.

co-management were looked upon with favor between husbands and wives and among family members.<sup>41</sup> Inscriptions and letters revealed the story of how women assisted men in their political careers, in supporting candidates for local political offices and as co-workers in personal businesses.

There were always those who wanted to place the lives of women under the authority of parents, brothers, or husbands out of fear of being ruled by women.<sup>42</sup> However, the rulers of vast and continually threatened realms needed the participation of wives and mothers for political as well as for personal reasons, and it was believed that a man who had the support of a wife or mother was more approachable and capable of clemency. Women were also known to give intelligent advice. It was not uncommon for an emperor's wife or mistress to gain the ear of the Roman emperor on behalf of an individual in need. This paradigm has lasted down through the ages to today.<sup>43</sup> By the fifth century C.E., Icons portrayed how mercy could be obtained through the intercession of Mary the mother of Jesus. The model of the "power behind the throne" was incorporated into religion from the world of politics and exists to our present day.<sup>44</sup>

Another factor during the Hellenistic period which influenced the role of women was the fact that the Macedonians were dominant. Their queens served as new paradigms for Greek women. They were not only

---

<sup>41</sup>Lefkowitz, 58.

<sup>42</sup>Lefkowitz, 59.

<sup>43</sup>Lefkowitz, 61.

<sup>44</sup>Lefkowitz, 62.

instrumental in social, political and cultural changes that transformed the Classical era into the Hellenistic, but they also embodied the new Hellenistic woman.<sup>45</sup> The Macedonians were pastoralists before the reign of Philip II. Consequently, Greek rural women enjoyed more freedom of movement than those living in urban settings. Women cared for the gardens and small animals, thus, it was mandatory to go outside. The rural areas also had fewer people, and women were less likely to encounter strange men. Since the Macedonians did not set certain areas off-limits for, especially, the women of the court, Macedonian women could be found on the battlefields and in positions of power. The primary focus was that the monarchy always took precedence over gender differences.<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, the Hellenistic period was also a time of continual strife. The king's most important function was to assure his country's victory. He served not only as the commander in chief, but also as a warrior, fighting alongside his troops. Allegiance was owed to the king, rather than to the nation, and the king must command his soldiers' respect. As a king, he enjoyed a tremendous amount of wealth in which he was expected to be a generous benefactor. He gave gifts to cities, temples and to individuals.<sup>47</sup> Macedonian queens often received these gifts in the form of property. By

---

<sup>45</sup>Pomeroy, 3.

<sup>46</sup>Pomeroy, 8-9.

<sup>47</sup>Pomeroy, 11-2.

this time, queens had gained the control of their own resources, without restraints upon its management.<sup>48</sup>

By the second century B.C.E., the queens began to assume the prerogatives of kings with greater regularity than in preceding centuries because Egypt was plagued by continual foreign invasions and civil unrest. As they began to exercise more of these prerogatives through successive reigns, the people began to accept their power as legitimate.<sup>49</sup> The Egyptian cult of Isis also helped to affirm their power. Whereas the Classical Athenian goddess, Athena, was a biological female who denied her femininity by denying her mother and referring to her birth only in terms of her father Zeus' head (the rational), she was not a threat to men. She stayed a virgin and focused her attention upon the virtues of reason, wisdom, and war. On the other hand, the Egyptian goddess, Isis, was a mother goddess who protected sea travelers and was tender, compassionate and merciful. She was a goddess of women, a patron of married life, protector of childbirth and infants and an inventor of spinning, weaving and of marriage contracts.<sup>50</sup> As a result of the cult of Isis, Egyptian queens had greater power and honor than kings. Among the common people, the wife ruled the husband, and he agreed to obey within the marriage contract.<sup>51</sup>

With the advent of monarchical government, the focus of men's lives changed from the public to the private sphere. Municipal life continued and

---

<sup>48</sup>Pomeroy, 15.

<sup>49</sup>Pomeroy, 23.

<sup>50</sup>Pomeroy, 39.

<sup>51</sup>Pomeroy, 40.



men vied for political offices, but their power diminished under the monarchy. There was little room left for the love of country now that armies were recruited from among mercenaries who sold their services to the highest bidder.<sup>52</sup>

The experience of rootlessness, the feeling of alienation, lack of political power, and the interest in the personal and the private which in an earlier age were characteristic of women were generalized and shared by men in Ptolemaic Egypt.<sup>53</sup>

### The Roman Republic and the Imperial Roman Empire

The social, political, economic and military context of the late Roman republic and early imperialistic period brought a shift in the understanding of the household paradigm upon which the Greek city-states were modeled. With the movement towards a centralized control of the entire Roman empire, there was also a resulting change in the flavor of the patronage system.<sup>54</sup> The ideology of patronage became an evil to be suppressed, and the usage of patron and client was used infrequently in literature because it connoted social inferiority and degradation.<sup>55</sup> In its place was used the Latin word with its Hebrew root, *amicus* "friend." This word was broad

---

<sup>52</sup>Pomeroy, 81.

<sup>53</sup>Pomeroy, 82.

<sup>54</sup>Richard P. Saller, Personal Patronage under the Early Empire (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982), 4.

<sup>55</sup>Saller, 9.

enough to encompass both social equals and unequals, although its usage did not bring about social equality because *amicitiae inferiores* or *amicitiae minores* was used instead to indicate differences in social status. This *amicitiae*, "friendship," was ideally based on mutual affection and the mutual and beneficial exchange of goods and services. Fidelity was also upheld as a virtue in this relationship instead of usefulness, because it was believed that friendships based on usefulness would be abandoned in times of crisis. The ideals of common interest and selfless service were viewed as part of the philosophy of *amicitia*. *Amicitia* also involved the reciprocal exchange of *officia*, *beneficia*, *gratia* and *meritum*. *Officia* meant "services rendered out of free will, kindness, favor, or courtesy to one whose claim was recognized." *Beneficium* was a "service rendered without a claim." *Gratia* was an "attitude of gratitude for favor granted or goodwill wished as a result of liking, love, or friendship." *Meritum* was offered for what was "deserved, just and proper" in a particular situation.<sup>56</sup>

Essentially, as the empire began to take over more of the patrons' role through impersonal administrative structures, the social role of administrators ceased to be defined in patronal terms.<sup>57</sup> Reciprocal relationships between husband-wife, master-slave and patron-freedman were carried over into the public sphere. There was no differentiation between public and private social roles in the Principate or in the Republic of Rome.<sup>58</sup> The most successful Roman aristocrats were those who used their

---

<sup>56</sup>Saller, 13.

<sup>57</sup>Saller, 23.

<sup>58</sup>Saller, 24, 26.

offices, honors, status and administrative decisions to produce a web of personal exchange relationships extending out from themselves. It was to their best interest to act as good patrons by distributing *beneficia*. In doing so, the emperor was able to ensure loyalty of an inner circle of friends; by granting them resources, he could build a clientel whose loyalty was indirectly secured.<sup>59</sup> It was not just men who had a role in the building of this web of interrelationships--when the boundaries between the public and private domains became blurred, women took advantage of it.

The Dio texts illustrate how Livia used the covert and persuasive power of the patronage system as *amicitiae* to her advantage. With respect to friendship, reciprocity and influence in the public sphere, Dio reports that the most important conversations which Augustus had with individuals were those with his own wife, Livia.<sup>60</sup> Augustus found these discussions to be most beneficial. When Cornelius and others had plotted to kill Augustus and were found out, Livia saved their lives by making certain suggestions to Augustus. She encouraged him in how difficult it was to guide a city to change from a democracy to a monarchy without bloodshed. However, she also admonished him that to continue in his old policies was not wise. Augustus heeded her admonition and, in turn, admonished the accused. But, he went one step further: he appointed Cornelius as consul. As a result, he gained favor and support.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup>Saller, 78.

<sup>60</sup>C. Suetonius Tranquillus, *Suetonius* (Augustus 84), vol. 1, trans. J. C. Rolfe. (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1964), 251.

<sup>61</sup>Cocceianus Cassius Dio, *Dio's Roman History* (55.22.1-2), vol. 6, trans. Earnest Cary (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1960), 451.

Livia had great influence over Augustus not only because of her loyalty and fidelity to him, but also because she spent her energy working to benefit the empire.<sup>62</sup> She was not hesitant to speak out on behalf of others and to others in public. She urged persons in their efforts to put out a fire near the temple of Vesta.<sup>63</sup> She saved the lives of men who had streaked in her presence by saying that "to chaste women such men are no whit different from statues."<sup>64</sup> Livia obtained a pardon for Plancina through private intercessions.<sup>65</sup> Otho, a son of a Roman knight and a mother who was perhaps a slave in Livia's household, became a senator through Livia's influence.<sup>66</sup> Galba showed respect to Livia who had given him favor and influenced him greatly during her lifetime.<sup>67</sup>

Augustus had granted *meritus* to Livia and Octavia because they had proven their ability and right to administer their own affairs without a guardian. He also gave them the same security and inviolability which the

---

<sup>62</sup>Cocceianus Cassius Dio, Dio's Roman History (58.2.5), vol. 7, trans. Earnest Cary (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), 189.

<sup>63</sup>C. Suetonius Tranquillus, Suetonius (Tiberius, 50), vol. 1, trans. J. C. Rolfe (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1964), 361-63.

<sup>64</sup>Cocceianus Cassius Dio, Dio's Roman History (58.2.4), vol. 7, trans. Earnest Cary (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), 189.

<sup>65</sup>Cornelius Tacitus, Tacitus: The Histories, The Annals (3.15), vol. 3, trans. Clifford H. Moore and John Jackson (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963), 197; Tacitus (6.26), 197.

<sup>66</sup>C. Suetonius Tranquillus, Suetonius (Otho 1), vol. 2, trans. J. C. Rolfe (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1965), 227.

<sup>67</sup>Tranquillus (Galba 5), 2:199.

tribune enjoyed.<sup>68</sup> Upon Augustus' death, Livia managed everything as if she were the sole ruler. Although she was careful not to enter the senate-chamber and public assemblies, she was able to receive members of the senate or others at her home at any time.<sup>69</sup>

Upon Livia's death at eighty-six, the senate voted for a year of mourning on the part of women. They also voted that an arch should stand in her honor--"a distinction conferred upon no other woman--because she had saved the lives of not a few of them, had reared the children of many, and had helped many to pay their daughters' dowries, in consequence of all which some were calling her Mother of her Country."<sup>70</sup> Livia occupied an exalted position far above all women who had preceded her, a position she had obtained through the covert and persuasive power present in her role as a servant leader, partner and friend in the household and as a friend to the people of the empire.

Livia used the patronage, *amicitiae*, system to her advantage. The personal power (honor) and influence which she attained was the result of a changing and in tension social, political, economic and military context, a context which relaxed the barriers between the public and private domains in the movement from a Republic to a monarchy. Moreover, her personal

---

<sup>68</sup>Cocceianus Cassius Dio, Dio's Roman History (49.38.1-2), vol. 5, trans. Earnest Cary (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1969), 419.

<sup>69</sup>Cocceianus Cassius Dio, Dio's Roman History (57.12.2-4), vol. 7, trans. Earnest Cary (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), 141.

<sup>70</sup>Dio (58.2.1-3), 7:187.

power (honor) and influence was also the result of her proven ability and skill to manage her own affairs.

This hidden but persuasive power, which we find in the households of Classical and Hellenistic Greece, the Roman Republic and early imperial Rome, influenced persons and enabled lives to be changed. Livia knew how to use this personal power for the benefit of the people and for the benefit of the empire in times of crisis and change. The leadership role of partnership, friendship, political equality and management for the common good of all within the household and within the empire, is a persuasive power that enables individuals to choose alternatives that can lead to growth, healing and change. Livia was in a position to hear, see and know things not otherwise known and, with her intuitive insight, was able to gain the trust of others, therefore, influencing them greatly which gave her political as well as personal power.

What we have seen is that both men and women used the patronage system to their advantage. Women had political power within a class-based system that was in a constant state of tension and evolution. The partnership, friendship, paradigm gave women a certain amount of political power and status which they used to their advantage in the private and public domains of Classical and Hellenistic Greece, the Roman Republic and Imperial Rome.

Moreover, wealthy women played a prominent role in public life from the second century B.C.E. to the third century C.E. A group of wealthy elites occupied the positions within the council, assembly and public offices. Persons used their own financial resources to benefit the city, rather than using the wealth of the city. These *beneficia's* led to the honoring of

individuals, and, eventually, to the assumption that it was an honor to use personal funds to pay the extra costs of their particular office, not touching public funds. Consequently, this led to certain offices outdoing each other in the giving of *beneficium*s. As a result, in the imperial period, fixed rates were attached to certain offices which had to be paid in order to gain entrance.<sup>71</sup>

Wealthy women were financially able to render the same social, political and financial services to their cities as the men and, as a result, were honored for their *beneficia*. Women took an active part in the public sphere. Many women held public offices, performed public liturgies, competed with men in the building of temples, theatres, public baths and continued to participate in the ever-increasing responsibilities of the priesthood, which included festivals, banquets, games to honor the gods and the restoration of buildings.

Women became more prominent in the Hellenistic and Roman periods because of the changes in the legal and economic spheres.<sup>72</sup> With the growing economic decay of the Greek cities in the second and third century C.E., pressure was placed on the wealthy to spend their money in costly offices with growing social obligations. When men were unable or reluctant to pay the costs, women began to step in. They benefitted from the ownership of land and owned grainland, vineyards, olive groves and pasture

---

<sup>71</sup>Riet Van Bremen, "Women and Wealth," *Images of Women in Antiquity*, eds. Averil Cameron and Amelie Kuhrt (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1983), 224.

<sup>72</sup>Van Bremen, 225.

land.<sup>73</sup> Women also owned about two-fifths of the land and were very active in money lending, especially when city life was prosperous during the first century B.C.E. to the second century C.E.<sup>74</sup>

Women experienced a growing legal and economic freedom, and with this freedom, the distinction between the public and private spheres disappeared.<sup>75</sup> "The private, domestic sphere, in all its aspects, overlaps increasingly with that of politics and public life."<sup>76</sup> Important citizens were adopted as "fathers," "mothers," "sons" and "daughters of the city." Whole cities mourned the loss of members of the ruling families, i.e., Livia. Patriotism took on a paternal and familial tone.

The private, domestic sphere of the woman's world became public. It was no longer the center of attention. Women become an important asset to their husbands and families. Not only did they continue the family line, but they also maintained the wealth of the family and its social status.

It is within this context of the Hellenistic and Roman periods that we again hear literary and philosophical voices on the subject of women. These men were profoundly conservative and consciously moral. They reacted to what they saw as morally degenerate times.<sup>77</sup> The stoics, Antipater of Tarsus, Musonius Rufus, Plutarch, and some Neo-pythagoreans, upheld the

---

<sup>73</sup>Van Bremen, 226-28.

<sup>74</sup>Van Bremen, 228.

<sup>75</sup>Van Bremen, 230.

<sup>76</sup>Van Bremen, 236

<sup>77</sup>J. P. V. D. Balsdon, Roman Women (London: Bodley Head, 1962), 26.



image of a woman as "the virtuous, modest wife, whose main task it [was] to care for her husband and children, who [was] pious and silent." Plutarch expressed that women should not speak in public, but ought to be modest and guard what they say in public. These writers upheld domestic life, marriage and affection as important in order to combat what they saw as a declining age in which women were lapsing into moral degradation.<sup>78</sup>

If every married man had been concerned to insure that his own wife looked up to him and respected his rightful position as her husband, we should not have half this trouble with women *en masse*. Instead, women have become so powerful that our independence has been lost in our own homes and is now being trampled and stamped underfoot in public. We have failed to restrain them as individuals, and now they have combined to reduce us to our present panic.<sup>79</sup>

Essentially, Rome faced an internal crisis beginning in the second century B.C.E. The Romans faced a declining birth rate, a high infant mortality rate and frequent deaths in childbirth. In order to combat this crisis, Augustus offered rewards to couples who married and brought children into the state.<sup>80</sup> In nineteen or eighteen B.C.E. a bill went through the Senate, stating that if men married between the ages of twenty-five and sixty and women, between the ages of twenty and fifty, they would be rewarded. Mothers of three children would receive a grant of independence to administer their own property, and a father of three could advance more expeditiously through the stages of his public career. For those who did not marry or were

---

<sup>78</sup>Van Bremen, 234.

<sup>79</sup>Balsdon, 33-4.

<sup>80</sup>Balsdon, 14.

childless, negative consequences resulted. Restrictions were placed on inheritances outside their small circle of family relations. The results of this civil legislation brought the family unit under public protection and penalized those who sought a different lifestyle. It also caused a return to ancient ideas of marriage for the purpose of procreation.<sup>81</sup> Thus, marriage and the protection of the family unit as a source of Roman citizenry became a political maneuver to combat the crumbling republic and to control the situation.<sup>82</sup>

Even so, a century or more before the end of the Republic, women had rebelled against the marriage system which kept them enslaved to their husbands. Women had emancipated themselves and acquired a great deal of liberty by the late Republic and early Imperial Empire.<sup>83</sup> Livia is a good example of one of these women. She had a personal staff of over one thousand and owned property in Asia Minor, Gaul, Palestine and parts of Italy. Livia was accustomed to intense business activity. She had complete independence of its administration. Livia also gained freedom from *patria potestas* in 35 B.C.E., was granted the rights of a mother of three children in 9 B.C.E. and on Augustus' death was exempt from the law which restricted the amount a woman could receive in inheritance.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup>Balsdon, 76-8.

<sup>82</sup>Balsdon, 47.

<sup>83</sup>Balsdon, 15.

<sup>84</sup>Balsdon, 93.

With respect to religion in the Greco-Roman context, Roman religion was dead in comparison to the new religions and philosophies being transported by the movement of troops and commerce back and forth from the East to the Mediterranean world. Oriental religions, such as the Syrian goddess cult, the cult of Isis and of Mithras, Judaism, Christianity and other mystery religions, offered the attraction of the mystical, deities whose interest was in the individual and the offer of hope, unlike the distant and impersonal Roman gods. The Syrian Goddess cult and the cult of Isis were extremely attractive to women because of their feminine imagery. The Syrian goddess functioned as part of the "holy trinity" -- mother, father and son, as well as being the mother of creation.<sup>85</sup> The Greco-Roman world was tolerant of these various philosophies and religious beliefs that drew upon male and female images.

The Second Testament written in Greek utilized the multiplicity of these images from the Greco-Roman context. Christianity developed out of this pluralistic milieu, embracing both male and female imagery, posing a threat to monotheism. Even Jewish monotheism had incorporated both the male and female. The Holy Spirit and wisdom were two feminine figures in early Jewish thought. The Syriac tradition of the orient also saw the Holy Spirit as feminine. The Syrian Judaeo-Christian Odes of Solomon dating to the second century C.E. offered images of the Holy Spirit as mother spirit. Even Christ was clothed in feminine images and terms.<sup>86</sup> What we discover is that

---

<sup>85</sup>Balsdon, 240.

<sup>86</sup>Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "Women in Early Syrian Christianity," Images of Women in Antiquity, eds. Averil Cameron and Amelie Kuhrt (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1983), 290.

"religious experience in the Syrian Orient both before and after Christianisation reveals an intense presence of powerful female imagery and symbols."<sup>87</sup>

Whenever feminine imagery was threatened, persons found alternative ways to incorporate it back into their religious system. Gnosticism posed a threat to feminine imagery in wisdom literature during the rabbinic period. The rabbinic response was to identify the holy Skekinah, the female personification of God's divine presence, as a way to maintain the feminine presence in their understanding of God.<sup>88</sup>

Marcionism was another who offered an egalitarian understanding of the gospel. His followers lived and worshipped according to a literal interpretation of Paul's understanding that in Christ there was neither male nor female. Women were granted the right to teach, exorcise and baptize.<sup>89</sup>

However, by the year 400, the "orthodox church" began to replace feminine imagery with masculine as pressure was applied to conform to Greco-Latin Christianity. Although, the need for the feminine still existed. We find in the fifth century an emergence of Marian devotion in order to meet this need. Mary becomes the symbol that touches deep needs in the Christian society.<sup>90</sup> However, she takes on the character of sanctity, obedience and submission as strict limitations are placed upon feminine

---

<sup>87</sup>Harvey, 291.

<sup>88</sup>Harvey, 290.

<sup>89</sup>Harvey, 294.

<sup>90</sup>Harvey, 293.

religious symbols and imagery leaving virgin Mary standing alone. Along with these strict limitations came the rigid restriction of women's place in Christian society.<sup>91</sup> It is in the period between the fifth to the ninth centuries that we encounter the motif of the transvestite saint. These women pursued their Christian vocation disguised as monks. Their sanctity was derived from living literally as men.<sup>92</sup>

Essentially, first century Christianity emerged out of the Greco-Roman milieu which spread across the Mediterranean area. Persons lived with the tensions of differences not only with respect to the two sides of Greek nature, but also with respect to a changing socio-political, economic, military and religious climate from Classical Greece to the Imperial Empire in Rome. The tension of differences, transition and internal and external conflict affected the household and its patronage system leading to a more collegial, partnership, friendship and egalitarian paradigm. Men and women were quick to take advantage of this changing climate. Because women's gender roles were in a constant state of dialogue and flux, this resulted in their growing legal and economic freedom. The blurring of boundary lines between the private and public spheres also allowed women to take a more active role in the social, political, economic and religious context of the Greco-Roman world.

Literary and philosophical writers through the centuries attached moral and biological reasons for what seemed to them to be the "natural" separation of the spheres. However, these reasons, in our contemporary

---

<sup>91</sup>Harvey, 295.

<sup>92</sup>Harvey, 297.

society, have become rigid absolutes, rules and laws which hinder the self-actualization of men and women's fullest potential for wholeness.

In practice, we found that women moved more and more into the public arena as a result of the evolving social, political, economic and military context. The patronage system as *amicitiae*, "friendship," "partnership," fostered women's participation. Women "naturally" filled in where men were unable or chose not to, exercising an ability to administer property, raise children and compete with men for political offices for the benefit of the city-state, the republic and the empire.

### The Emergence of the Pauline Epistles

Paul's epistles emerge out of this Greco-Roman milieu. 1 Corinthians is a good example of the way in which Paul struggled with differences. Corinth was a strategically placed wealthy commercial center, situated on the narrow isthmus that connected the mainland of Greece and the Peloponnesus. It was the hub of commerce and contained a population of mixed character. The church in Corinth was made up of a mixture of classes and people and provided the opportunity to live out the tensions of multiplicity experienced in the culture. Paul was not interested in transforming the social, economic and political structure of the Hellenistic World.<sup>93</sup> In fact, he tried to focus upon a consistent core of the gospel in the midst of a multiplicity of

---

<sup>93</sup>Christiaan Beker, Paul, the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 318-26.

traditions.<sup>94</sup> Paul's hermeneutical task, which was well-known to Judaism's hermeneutics, was to take the variety of traditions, oral and written, and bring them to voice in the present, fitting them to present situations and overcoming the distance between the past and the present.<sup>95</sup>

Paul's hermeneutic was a constant interplay between the coherent center of the gospel and its contingent interpretation. His task was to take the coherent core of the gospel, the righteousness of God revealed in the death/resurrection of Christ, and given to all peoples as God's liberating act for all creation, applying it to various situations to meet the needs of the churches without compromising its coherent core.<sup>96</sup> Paul's hermeneutic allowed the gospel to come alive and be able to address the daily life of the churches. The core was not fixed and frozen, but instead was adaptable and fluid. For Paul, tradition was interpreted tradition with the help of the freedom of the spirit in light of each situation. The truth and power of the Gospel was verified in light of a particular context that existed in dialectical tension.<sup>97</sup>

Paul's epistles were meant to be a dialogical and theological treatise, a word on target in the midst of a historically contingent situation, that spoke to a particular people in their public worship together. They were not meant

---

<sup>94</sup>Beker, 207.

<sup>95</sup>Beker, 118-21.

<sup>96</sup>Beker, 11-2.

<sup>97</sup>Beker, 33-5.

to be universalized into a docetic theology with doctrinal unity.<sup>98</sup> The tendency to search for dogmatic timeless truths in Paul's writings only freezes its dialogical and fluid nature and stilts the meaning of his gospel.<sup>99</sup>

Colossians, Ephesians, 1 Timothy, Titus and 1 Peter are five deutero-Pauline letters written much later by a Pauline school. These texts strive to articulate a code of orthodoxy, a set of practices and a certain kind of behavior. As a result, the tension of differences and the multiplicity of traditions is removed, and absolute timeless truths are sought in order to reinforce "proper" behavior for the church for all times.

With this in mind, let us turn now to the work done in the field of feminist biblical hermeneutics in order to glean helpful insights into the formulation of key questions which, when applied to a text, will aid in the faithful interpretation of a biblical text in a new context -- our context.

---

<sup>98</sup>Beker, 25-7.

<sup>99</sup>Beker, 27-8.



## CHAPTER 4

### Feminine Insights and Biblical Hermeneutics

This chapter endeavors to draw upon the insights of feminist writers in order to identify a number of key questions which, if asked of the text, would reveal a more complete picture of male and female experience and uncover the dynamics present within the particular textual *Sitz im Leben*.

Chapter 3 noted the tension in the Greco-Roman world between the two sides of Greek nature embodied within the household structure: the hierarchal male dominating nature, which many identify as patriarchy, and the partnership or collegial nature, which focuses on friendship and egalitarianism. Feminist writers note that women do not have control nor shape their own lives in a predominately hierarchal male dominated system. In this type of system the most basic understandings of human nature are drawn from male experience. Male experience becomes normative for what is human nature. As a result, women's experience is excluded, and women must accept external norms as definitive of their identity.

#### Jewish History and Patriarchalism

Judaism is often identified as the perpetrator of these patriarchal paradigms which found their way into the Second Testament texts. I would like to suggest that Judaism grew out of the Greco-Roman milieu and struggled with the same dialogical tensions as the Greco-Roman world. This is clearly evident if we turn to the writing of Aviva Cantor in "The Lilith

Question." Ancient Jewish legend tells us that Lilith was the name of the first woman which God created. Lilith believed herself to be created equal with Adam. However, Adam refused to accept her equality and, in turn, Lilith refused to give up her independence and dignity. Consequently, she chose loneliness over subservience and fled from Adam and the Garden of Eden. In Jewish tradition, Lilith becomes identified as a demon because of her refusal to give up her independence.<sup>1</sup>

What is most interesting is that this myth, like many other myths, developed out of the period of the Babylonian Exile (586 B.C.E.), and was reinforced and expanded after the Roman deportation of the Jews and the destruction of the temple (70 C.E.). These two watershed events in Jewish history marked a traumatic break from life in their homeland. Both of these events scattered the Jewish people, leaving them to exist as a minority on the fringes of societies with no control over their own destiny.

For the next 2,000 years (until 1948), Jews would live at the fringes of societies, marginal to their socioeconomic structures, their history, culture, religion, politics and passions; subject to the whim of the ruling class; to summary expulsion; to persecution by the law and the lawless; to humiliation; and to murder.<sup>2</sup>

Exile was a perceived threat to the future of Judaism; it must be endured and overcome. It was also a threat to the male ego because it put them in a state of powerlessness over their own social-political and economic situation

---

<sup>1</sup>Aviva Cantor, "The Lilith Question," On Being a Jewish Feminist, ed. Susannah Heschel (New York: Schocken, 1983), 41.

<sup>2</sup>Cantor, 44.

and triggered feelings of shame. As a result, men turned to the study of Jewish law in order to maintain their masculinity and to survive. Men believed that if women were submissive and obedient within the household and within their religious faith, it would insure their manhood and power. Thus, the myth was passed on from one generation to the next that women must be the enablers of men in order to insure Jewish survival and honor.

In Jewish mythology, Eve represented the enabler, the "mother of all life," whereas Lilith embodied the woman who refused to be an enabler, the "destroyer of life." By creating Lilith, men were telling women that if they were independent, assertive, and free like their counterparts in the Greco-Roman world, they would end up "frigid nymphomaniac childless witches." As a result, Lilith became identified with three crimes: preventing childbearing; injuring newborn babies; exciting men to ejaculate in their sleep, stealing their sperm to manufacture demon children in place of their own. However, these three alleged crimes embody the critical fears of men: loss of potency and manhood, loss of woman's companionship and emotional support, and threat to survival.<sup>3</sup>

The male ego saw the Exile as a threat to manhood, a destruction of male morale, and the extinction of Jewish people. It was also a reason for the prohibition of homosexuality. Homosexuality modeled the dominance of one man over another, making him subordinate and inferior.

In patriarchal societies where a man's manhood is defined in whole or part by his ability to father children, the fear that Lilith (woman) can prevent men from having children in one way or another means that she robs them of their manhood.

---

<sup>3</sup>Cantor, 45-6.

In their powerless condition in Exile, Jewish men needed to prove their maleness to differentiate themselves from women, the group whose condition of ultimate powerlessness they feared being reduced to.<sup>4</sup>

Procreation would guarantee the survival of the Jewish people and the maintainance of their honor as a people, although the fear of a woman's personal power to withhold herself from a man by refusing comfort or her very presence was a threat. In the stressful situation of the Exile, Jewish men were anxious about women not fulfilling their roles as providers of emotional support in such trying times. Consequently, the fears of Jewish men were projected onto Jewish women as though they had the power to make men's fears a reality by refusing to be subservient enablers (co-dependent).

Although men saw women in more assertive roles in the Greco-Roman world due to the socio-political, economic and military context, men interpreted this assertiveness as altruism which could be used to create an even better enabler. The "altruistic-assertive" role model of a woman was personified in Esther. In the book of Esther, Jewish survival was threatened and Esther played the role of altruistic-assertive enabler in order to save her people. Vashti, on the other hand, represented the nonaltruistic-assertive woman (Lilith) who lost her crown because she refused to obey the king. This story was used to reinforce Jewish women as enablers.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>Cantor, 46.

<sup>5</sup>Cantor, 46-7.

Key question: How does the text perpetuate images of women or persons as altruistic-assertive enablers, in order to meet the deeper needs of persons who are in control? (How does the system of honor and shame expose the dynamics present within the particular context?)

The real threat to the Jews was not the rebellion of women but the Exile which made men "powerless and put them at the mercy of the rulers, on the fringes of society and into roles that turned the masses against them."<sup>6</sup> Jewish men saw assimilation as seductive and unsatisfying so they projected their fears unto the image of Lilith (women). "She saps a man's 'life fluid' a metaphor for strength; she destroys his possibility for achieving immortality. She attacks Jews when they're most vulnerable or unaware. She robs them of their power and of their future."<sup>7</sup> Lilith became a metaphor for the experience of men in Exile.

The creation of Lilith as a negative role model served to coalesce the fears of the men and project them onto the woman, thus reflecting a fear of woman's power to refuse to be the enabler; and to warn all women of the fate awaiting a woman who refuses to be an enabler."<sup>8</sup>

Such projections can and do lead eventually to abuse, if continued. When power or control of one's personal life is taken out of an individual person's hands and placed in the hands of others (which happened as a result of the

---

<sup>6</sup>Cantor, 48.

<sup>7</sup>Cantor, 48.

<sup>8</sup>Cantor, 48.

evolving transition from a city-state to an empire), the person began to feel ashamed, powerless and in a state of chaos. Such powerlessness and chaos caused those persons to take control in areas most accessible to them turning chaos into some semblance of hierarchal order. Some men who lost their sense of power and control (self-identity) in the public sphere tried to take even more control over the household in an effort to assert their manhood.

Stereotypically, the Jewish family has been upheld as the ideal family. Jewish women have been taught that Jewish men are smart, successful, healthy, generous where their family is concerned and given to very little violence. Mimi Scarf in her article "Marriages Made in Heaven?" reveals the truth of such idealized images of the Jewish family studied in the Los Angeles Jewish community. Christianity has also bought into the propaganda of the perfect patriarchal family and Jewish and Christian women have been brainwashed into believing the myth that they are ultimately responsible for the success or failure of the marriage and family. When women experience wife-beating, they feel a sense of deep shame for the failure of the marriage and of the family. They refuse to discuss the beatings with their children, husbands, therapist, friends or family because these women have been raised to believe that Jewish men are incapable of beating their wives. Therefore, it must be their fault. This idealized concept of the family within Jewish society prevents women from seeking help and prevents those who could give help from giving it.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup>Mimi Scarf, "Marriages Made in Heaven?" On Being a Jewish Feminist, ed. Susannah Heschel (New York: Schocken, 1983), 51-2.

Rabbis and other Jews in the helping professions, in their zeal to promote the Jewish home and family, frequently prevent themselves from recognizing that problems that afflict other cultural ethnic, or religious groups exists in their own.<sup>10</sup>

The shame experienced from being battered by their husbands renders Jewish women helpless. These women would rather endure the beating than run the risk of admitting it, because it would bring shame upon the entire family, especially if the parents prearranged the marriage. Such a marriage is made in heaven and "man" cannot undo what God has joined together. The family lives in a state of denial. The in-laws could not admit to raising a son who beats his wife, and the bride's parents could not face the shame of approving of such a marriage, or the resulting shame of a divorce.<sup>11</sup> As Christian ministers, are we so busy upholding the values of the ideal family that we are missing the true reality beneath the surface of persons' lives who live in abusive patriarchal households?

Key question: What external or internal threat to a particular group's self-identity gives rise to the exercise of authority, power, and control, over persons' lives prohibiting their full participation in society? (How does the element of honor and shame give rise to the drawing of rigid boundary lines?)

---

<sup>10</sup>Scarf, 52.

<sup>11</sup>Scarf, 61.

### Authority and Power

It is true that all human relationships contain the dynamics of authority and power within them. As human beings, we need structures of authority in order to function in this world. However, these structures can either contribute to the well-being of a community or they can be structures of domination and tyranny. Letty Russell in her book, Household of Freedom, defines "power as the ability to accomplish desired ends."<sup>12</sup> When the focus of power is upon the person initiating change with or without the consent of the respondent, the power can be competitive and can be exercised as influence or force. Authority is power that has been legitimized by the permission of the respondents and through the structures of society taking the form of hierarchy and control. Authority within relationships is established through structural authority which comes from a position of influence in the social, political and economic spheres. Persons gain the assent of others through recognition of their knowledge, ability to lead and speak, and their wisdom obtained through lived experiences which helps others to cope with their lives.

The way authority and power are exercised determines whether it is seen as authority, as domination, or as partnership. In patriarchal paradigms, feminists note that power and authority are exercised as domination, control and competition. However, in paradigms of partnership, friendship and

---

<sup>12</sup>Letty M. Russell, Household of Freedom; Authority in Feminist Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 21.



equality, power and authority are exercised as empowerment and authorizing.<sup>13</sup> Persons are seen as honoring one another.

The Gospels describe Jesus' power and authority in his ministry as empowerment through healing: release of captives, sight to the blind, healing the lame, and so forth. His authority was in his ability to forgive sins, cast out unclean spirits, and preach good news to the poor. Jesus' focus was upon empowering the community of humankind with these same abilities in order that the reign of God might be made manifest upon the face of the earth. His interest was not in perpetuating patriarchal paradigms gleaned from Roman models of legitimized authority as domination in politics, culture and the household; or from Aristotle's hierarchal understanding of the household as the natural order of things for women, children and slaves to be dominated by their husbands, fathers, or masters. Besides, patriarchal paradigms are only half of the story, part of Greco-Roman nature, and not a paradigm that helps persons to have a sense of personal control over their own lives.<sup>14</sup>

If we are to break out of this mind set of always seeing authority rooted in "timeless unchanging patriarchal archetypes," we need to have an alternative way of understanding authority. Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza offers an alternative in her book, In Memory of Her. Fiorenza suggests that we use the word "prototype" as a model for understanding the authority of biblical revelation and patriarchal paradigms. The word "prototype" offers a more fluid understanding, not a binding, timeless pattern or principle, but a

---

<sup>13</sup>Russell, Household of Freedom, 21-3.

<sup>14</sup>Russell, Household of Freedom, 25.

more transformative sense of the evolution of history and paradigms, based upon particular contextual situations. The Scriptures as historical prototype give a sense of the ongoing history of the Christian community as it symbolizes and resymbolizes those elements that bring meaning to their lives and give a sense of theological identity.<sup>15</sup> This alternative view of prototype enables us to lift up the other side of Greek nature which is often glossed over but very present in the Greco-Roman understanding of the household -- authority as partnership.

Key question: How is the household metaphor of patriarchy versus the metaphor of partnership in tension within the text? If this tension is missing, how has its removal been justified?

Shared Authority: "The Household of God"

With the above understanding of authority in mind, Letty Russell suggests that the "Household of God" is a place of shared authority living in community with each other. The relationship God has with humankind is a covenant partnership with shared authority and responsibility. Therefore, feminists suggest a new paradigm of authority based upon this shared partnership with multiple authorities working together to enrich the whole. Authority is exercised within a community of interdependent relationships that work to reinforce ideas of cooperation through the acceptance of differences. When differences are accepted and valued, persons who have

---

<sup>15</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 33-4.

been marginalized and disenfranchised begin to discover their own worth (honor) as human beings.<sup>16</sup>

Authority as partnership frames discussion in terms of communal search and sharing in which all can rejoice when anyone gains a new insight that can be shared together on the journey toward God's new creation.<sup>17</sup>

As was noted in chapter three, Livia understood the importance of partnering others. It is through being partners with others that we learn how to become human beings able to partner others, God, creation and ourselves along the journey of life. We were created to be in community. It is in the community of the household of God that we discover who we are and find strength to live.

The word for house, dwelling or temple appears some two thousand times in the Bible as a key metaphor of Greek and Hebrew hospitality. The household was an important place of fellowship, eating, drinking and teaching in the Greco-Roman world. Supper clubs were a vital part of the culture. It is no mystery, then, that the Gospel writers would use the metaphor of the household of faith to symbolize Christ's resurrected body and the church. Paul also saw the household metaphor for authority as a place of freedom where the tension of differences could be accepted and lived out.<sup>18</sup> "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free,

---

<sup>16</sup>Russell, Household of Freedom, 26, 33-34.

<sup>17</sup>Russell, Household of Freedom, 35.

<sup>18</sup>Russell, Household of Freedom, 37.

there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). All persons have honor and a place within the household of God.

The Second Testament offers glimpses of the household of freedom. The Gospel writers reveal the gathering of men and women around Jesus, forming a new community who do the will of God (Matt. 10:37; 12:48-49). Such followers of Jesus were also known as the new family of God, which included the *ochlos*, the poor and the outcasts of society. Pauline congregations met in house churches that were inclusive of family, slaves, freed persons, servants, laborers, business associates and tenants (1 Cor. 1:26-30). Men and women worked together as partners in ministry regardless of social standing. They represented the other side of Greek nature that endeavored to live in partnership with each other and with God.

However, in the latter deuterio-Pauline letters, the household of equals becomes a household of rules in which differences are eliminated and authority changes from partnership to hierarchal domination as the church takes on institutional and patriarchal patterns. This was the result of a gradual accommodation to the growing monarchial socio-political context of the imperial Roman world in the later centuries. Ephesians 5:21-6:9 is a good example of the household of God taking on patriarchal paradigms as wives, children, and slaves are subordinated to husbands, fathers, and masters. The church becomes associated with the household of God on a more universal cosmic level, developing orders of ministry that are hierarchical and patriarchal (1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Peter 2:5).<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup>Russell, Household of Freedom, 38-9.

**Key question:** How does the exercise of authority as partnership bring about reconciliation, healing and the reign of God into the contextual situation and/or how does the exercise of authority as patriarchalism result in marginalization and disenfranchisement within the contextual situation?

### **Depatriarchalization within the Text**

If we believe, as I have been saying all along, that the biblical texts evolved out of the Greco-Roman milieu and with its tension between hierarchal, patriarchal, structures of the household, state and empire versus the more collegial partnership understanding of the household, then what Phyllis Trible has to say is helpful. She writes that "**depatriarchalizing** is not an operation which the exegete performs on the text. It is a hermeneutic operating within Scripture itself. We expose it; we do not impose it."<sup>20</sup> The biblical texts are not just totally androcentric because they are written by men, but they are the work of the faith community living in tension, living in dialogue, with the surrounding Greco-Roman milieu where examples of patriarchalism and egalitarianism were functioning.

Equally, we can find examples of women's terror in the face of patriarchal structures, which Phyllis Trible has so well shown in her book, Texts of Terror, i.e. Hagar (Gen. 16:1-16), Tamar (2 Sam. 13:1-22), the unnamed woman (Judg. 19:1-30), the daughter of Jephthah (Judg. 11:29-40) and many others whose stories have been documented or undocumented throughout history. But we can also find stories, from the Biblical texts, of women who

---

<sup>20</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 20.

had equal standing with men and are shown in a positive light i.e.: the creation story (Gen. 1:2); the story of Deborah (Judg. 4:5); the portrayal of wisdom as a woman (Prov. 8:9); the portrayal of the lovers in the Song of Solomon, or the story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42); the women at Jesus' tomb; Priscilla, Lydia, Prisca, Junia and many others who played the role of prophet throughout Israel's history, i.e., Miriam (Num. 12:1-2), Deborah (Judg. 4:4-16), Noadiah (Neh. 6:14), Elizabeth and Mary (Luke 1:39-56), the widow Anna (Luke 2:36). These women were leaders, prophets, evangelists, missionaries and apostles.<sup>21</sup>

### First Testament Images of Women

Positive images of the assertiveness and independence of women (Lilith) are portrayed in the First Testament story of the Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, who disobeyed Pharaoh and refused to dispose of the Hebrew male children at birth (Exod. 1:15-17); the disobedience of a Hebrew woman who bears a son and saves his life by putting him into a basket at the bank of the Nile River; Pharaoh's daughter who finds the child and raises him as her own against her father's command. (The child survives to become the deliverer of his people.) The midwives, the Hebrew woman, the sister and Pharaoh's daughter acted independently, not as adjuncts of men, and their independence, assertiveness and disobedience resulted in the deliverance of the Hebrew people from slavery. In this story of Moses, we

---

<sup>21</sup>Joanna Dewey, "Images of Women," The Liberating Word, ed. Letty M. Russell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 62-3.

see both women and men acting as agents of God's salvation and, in particular, women are the first agents of God's deliverance.<sup>22</sup>

Second Kings 22:1-23:3 reminds us of the number of women who were prophets in the life of Israel and spoke on behalf of God. During repairs of the temple in the seventh century B.C., the book of the Law was found and read. Upon hearing part of its contents, Josiah, the king of Judah, was distressed because he realized their fate was sealed for having strayed so far from the Law. Josiah sought out the prophet Huldah for the validity of the book. She prophetically responded that the wrath of God would fall upon Judah. Josiah responded to her message by carrying out the most comprehensive reform in the history of the kingdom. Josiah's actions validated Huldah's role as prophet and as a woman. Not only was she a prophet, but she was competent to speak on behalf of God regardless of her sex.

During the fourth century B.C. after the return of the Jews to Jerusalem from exile, the Jews suffered an identity crisis and began to take control through patriarchal structures of subordination of women, children, and slaves. However, Joel, the prophet, prophesied against their action of subordination because he understood God as pouring forth God's spirit upon all people equally.

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even upon the menservants and maidservants in those days, I will pour out my spirit. (Joel 2:28-29)

---

<sup>22</sup>Dewey, 63-5.

Again in Acts 2:1-18, we see God's spirit being poured forth upon all people at Pentecost, regardless of social standing or gender.<sup>23</sup>

### Gospel Images of Women

In Mark 7:24-30 and Matt. 15:21-28, Jesus encounters a Syrophoenician woman seeking healing for her daughter. The dialogue which ensues is over Jesus' ministry to Jews and Gentiles. It takes this woman's perseverance and assertiveness to convince Jesus that his ministry is also to the Gentiles. As a result, this encounter sets the stage for the expansion of Jesus' ministry to the Gentiles. It took a woman (and a Gentile woman) to change Jesus' mind. No other person in the Gospels is recorded as having changed Jesus' mind. Jesus' lack of discrimination against women and men is shown in the healings of both men and women (Luke 7:2-12; 13:10-16; 14:2-6); men and women will either be saved or left behind (Matthew 24:40-41); Jesus' discussion with the Samaritan women (John 4:4-42); the anointing of Jesus by a prostitute in which he compares her to the righteous Pharisee (Luke 7:36-50). Jesus pointed out that his kindred are those who do the will of God, not just those related by blood line (Mark 3:31-35; Matthew 12:46-50 and Luke 8:19-21). This action was in direct opposition to those who chose exclusivity and patriarchalism over against egalitarianism. Jesus openly taught women along with men (Luke 10:38-42) and had women as his disciples, because he took it for granted that both men and women could do

---

<sup>23</sup>Dewey, 68-9.



the will of God and were equal in the eyes of God (Luke 8:1-3, Mark 15:40-41).<sup>24</sup>

Women also were not afraid to be called Jesus' disciples as they accompanied him on his ministry to Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem and witnessed his crucifixion as a criminal. Women were identified by name as the first witnesses of the resurrection (Luke 24:1-11, Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-8, John 20:1-18). Mary Magdalene must have been an outstanding leader in the early church because she is mentioned by all four gospel writers, whereas the names of other women vary. The gospel writers record that women were the primary witnesses to the early Christian message: they were witnesses to Jesus' ministry, death, burial and resurrection.

However, if we take a closer look at this particular account of the resurrection in the four gospels, we find an androcentric tendency toward patriarchalism in its efforts to play down the role of women as witnesses and apostles of the resurrection. Mark stresses that the women said nothing because they were afraid (Mark 16:8). Luke reports that the words of the women appeared to be "an idle tale, and they did not believe them" (Luke 24:11). (Instead, they went to see for themselves.) Luke continues to exclude women as apostles in Acts 1:21 when he stresses that only men were eligible to replace Judas. Luke also has Jesus appearing first to Simon Peter, whereas Matthew, Mark and John, record Jesus' appearance to the women first. Moreover, Mark points out that they did not believe Mary's story and, in John, the beloved disciple is recorded as the first believer of the

---

<sup>24</sup>Dewey, 69-75.

resurrection without seeing the body of Jesus. John plays down the role of Mary's resurrection experience.<sup>25</sup>

Key question: Where do we see the hermeneutic of depatriarchalization functioning within the text?

I agree with Fiorenza in her book, In Memory of Her, that the Jesus Movement was a renewal movement within Israel, although not because Israel had become like the patriarchal Greco-Roman world, but because some Israelite groups had a tendency to remove the tension present in the Greco-Roman world in its understanding of the household and the household of God. Some groups within Israel were moving more and more toward a hardened position of patriarchy over against egalitarianism, which had been their tendency after the exile in 586 B. C.<sup>26</sup>

This struggle is evident if we look at the tension between the various factions within Israel over the issue of what one must do to enter the kingdom of God. The priests and aristocracy wanted to preserve Israel's national existence by preserving the Temple and the capital through collaboration with the Romans. The Essenes dealt with the issue by going off into the countryside to establish their own communes where everything was held in common, developing their own forms of ritual purity, devoting themselves to agricultural labor and strictly interpreting the Torah. The Qumran community is an example of one of these groups that responded to the illegitimate rituals and corrupt priesthood of the Temple by going off

---

<sup>25</sup>Fiorenza, "Interpreting Patriarchal Traditions," 53-54.

<sup>26</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 100.

into the desert to create a "holy people" to replace the Temple and its priesthood until such time as it was restored to its sacredness. The *Sicarii* were a rebellious group of impoverished and disenfranchised people who were fed up with taxes, Roman occupation, and desecration, and sought military liberation. The Pharisees' vision was not to separate from the people around them but to become a "holy priesthood" by transferring cultic purity and priestly holiness to everyday life. Their focus centered around the cultic purity of table fellowship and its dietary laws, the meticulous paying of Levitical and priestly tithes, and the keeping of sabbath and purity laws. Some, however, formed urban religious communities where they could apply rigorous Levitical cleanliness to the preparation and eating of their food and could keep company with those who did the same. The Pharisees were a politically split group, some of whom supported revolutionary unrest while others advocated a politics of nonviolence. The apocalyptic prophets, who announced God's wrath and judgment, endeavored to reenact the Exodus by leading people out into the desert where they could seek God's forgiveness and be baptized. And finally, the Sadducees were the landholders, merchants and influential upper class who adhered strictly to the Torah as the only written authority of God's revelation. They rejected the innovation of the Pharisees' claim to the authority of both oral and written Torah. Even within this mix of people and ways of living out the gospel, we find the patriarchalizing tendencies to conform everyone to one mode of thinking perpetuating as normative the view of those who have political authority.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 112-3.

Jesus looked beyond all the external ways of entering the kingdom of God and focused on the wholeness of creation obtained through first looking within persons and then taking action to set people free from those things that deny them the right of fullest expression in living fully as equals with all of creation. Jesus' vision of the reign of God was present in the symbol of the wedding feast or royal banquet that was inclusive of all peoples rather than the exclusive image of the cultic meal. Wholeness could be found whenever demons were cast out, the sick healed, the ritually unclean made clean, the lost found, the uninvited invited and the last became the first.

The power of God's *basileia* is realized in Jesus' table community with the poor, the sinners, the tax collectors, and prostitutes - with all those who "do not belong" to the "holy people," who are somehow deficient in the eyes of the righteous. The future can be experienced in the healings, the inclusive discipleship, and the parabolic words of Jesus, but Jesus still hopes and expects the future inbreaking of God's *basileia* when death, suffering, and injustice finally will be overcome (Mark 12:18-27 and parallels).<sup>28</sup>

**Key question:** How are differences recognized and celebrated within the biblical text, or is everyone compelled to conform to one image or paradigm?

---

<sup>28</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 121.

### Images of Women in the Christian Movement

The sources are sketchy with respect to the early Christian missionary movement between 30 and 50 C. E. Paul's letters were written around the 50s and 60s and Acts belongs to the last decade of the first century. It is believed that the writer of Acts probably never saw the Pauline letters; therefore, it is important to supplement and correct the account in Acts with respect to the early Christian developments with the Pauline letters. As I noted earlier, Paul's letters were occasional pastoral writings, written for a particular situation in time. Paul's interest does not lie in conveying historical information on the early Christian movement. Instead, he is interested in dealing with the situation at hand.<sup>29</sup>

Paul's letters reveal, in many places, the full participation of women in the Christian movement as leaders and missionaries before Paul's time. During his lifetime, many worked independently from him. Women were instrumental in continuing what Jesus had started and expanding it to greater lengths to include the Gentiles in the adjacent regions. In some cases, we find women not only as equals but superior to Paul in their work of spreading the gospel. Paul is not hesitant to mention women as his coworkers and equals. In 1 Cor. 16:16ff, Paul admonishes the Corinthians to be "subject to every co-worker and laborer" and to recognize such persons. One Thessalonians 5:12 exhorts the Thessalonians to "respect those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you." In Rom. 16:6, 12, he commends Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis for having

---

<sup>29</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 160-1.

"labored hard" in their teaching and evangelizing. In Phil. 4:2-3, Paul explicitly states that Euodia and Syntyche had "contended" side by side with Paul. Paul recognizes the authority of women within the Philippian community to such an extent that he fears dissension between them might hinder the progress of the Christian mission. Therefore, he reminds them of their shared and equal partnership in the work of the gospel. In Rom. 16:1ff, Phoebe is noted by Paul as a minister of the whole church of Cenchreae in Rome, and Prisca and Aquila, Andronicus and Junia are mentioned as missionary partners who worked with Paul in Antioch. Missionary couples or pairs (male and female) appeared often in missionary work. (Jesus had sent his disciples out two by two.) Moreover, there is no indication whether they were married or not, as was the case with Prisca and Junia. What was important was their partnership in the spreading of the gospel, not their status or role as wives. The writings of the Acts of Paul and Thecla contain a second century example of a woman missionary who was commissioned by Paul to go and teach the gospel. Women from Carthage in the third century often appealed to this story for the authority to teach and to baptize.<sup>30</sup>

Essentially, what we find in the first century is that women were actively involved as traveling missionaries and as patrons and leaders of house churches. It was not unusual for wealthy women to open their homes to different oriental cults, including the Christian movement. Women played a major role in the founding, sustaining and promoting of these churches. The house church provided the space, support and leadership which the early Christian movement needed in order to prosper. Paul mentions a number of

---

<sup>30</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 161, 169-70, 172-3.

these women in his letters: Apphia was a leader in the house church in Colossae (Philem. 2); Prisca and Aquila had a church in their home (1 Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:5); Nympha had a church in her home in Laodicea (Col. 4:15); and Lydia was a leader in the church of Thyatira (Acts 16:15). These women were important initiators and leaders within the house churches; there were also key women in churches named after men (Acts 10:1ff; 16:32ff; 18:8ff; 1 Cor. 1:14; 1:16; 16:15ff; Rom. 16:23). Women also were very active in the Roman church even into the third century. Paul greets twenty-five persons in the church at Rome, eight of whom are women.<sup>31</sup>

The patronage system played a very important role in the early Christian movement, as some women and men joined these associations of equals as founders and patrons. As we discussed earlier, in a client-patron system, one would expect that persons entering these associations would enter with the intent of receiving some *beneficium* in return; however, we find no record of such honors being bestowed upon its wealthy members. What we do see is that patrons used their network of connections, friendships and influences to help the Christian communities. Even Paul acknowledged the favors and assistance given him by Phoebe when he asked the Roman community to repay her for him.<sup>32</sup>

Phoebe's patronage was not limited to the community in Cenchreae but included many others, even Paul himself, who stood with Phoebe in a patron-client relationship. Such patronage did not consist merely in financial support and

---

<sup>31</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 173, 176-77, 179-80.

<sup>32</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 181.

hospitality on behalf of clients but also in bringing her influence to bear and in using her connections for them.<sup>33</sup>

Conflict between Equality and  
Patriarchy in the First Century

Because of my understanding of the tension present within the Greco-Roman milieu, I disagree with Fiorenza's claim that the early Christian communities were the first place where egalitarianism was experienced. I have tried to show that the Christian communities and their house churches were one of many opportunities for persons to live out their need to be in partnership with others. The Christian movement drew upon the evolving paradigms of the Greco-Roman milieu of the household and its patronage system as partnership and friendship and the honor and shame system, using it to their advantage. However, I do not want to appear to be naive, for it is my suspicion that some persons may have found the house churches to be the fullest expression possible of egalitarianism--but it certainly was not the only place. Many oriental cults initiated women into their groups without respect to family, class or social status (except for one group, Mithraism).<sup>34</sup>

Paul wrestles throughout his letters in their various contextual *sitz im leben* with those who have differing views. There were always those who wanted everyone to conform to the same rigid paradigm, but Paul continued

---

<sup>33</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 182.

<sup>34</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 213.



to draw upon the pre-Pauline early Jewish-Hellenistic baptismal formula in order to bring about unity where there was dissension. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Jesus Christ" (Gal. 3:28). Persons were not to be defined by their procreative abilities, social status or gender roles, but instead, by their discipleship in Jesus Christ and their empowerment through the Holy Spirit as equals.

Feminist studies have documented that gender roles are a culturally conceived bias that tries to legitimate its claim by drawing upon such biological capabilities as sexual intercourse, childbearing and lactation in an effort to control and dominate others. Patriarchal cultures are a good example of how strictly defined gender roles are used to exploit the lives of both men and women. Galatians 3:28 advocates the abolishment of such religious-cultural divisions and the domination and exploitation brought about by institutional slavery and rigidly defined gender roles. Paul's focus is on "the oneness of the body of Christ, the church, where all social, cultural, religious, national and biological gender divisions and differences are overcome and all structures of domination are rejected."<sup>35</sup>

Paul's letters reveal over and over again the importance of embracing the wide diversity of persons and their gifts into the one body of Christ. Paul's playfulness and humor with persons who want to draw rigid boundary lines is revealed, in particular, in 1 Cor. 7:1-9. In order to uncover the humor, we need to draw upon Rhetorical Criticism, which endeavors to lift up the implied dialogue between Paul and the Corinthians. Paul uses the strategy of

---

<sup>35</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 218.

digression in the first six chapters in order to draw his audience's attention away from those issues which they deemed most important. Instead, he writes about issues he believes more important than their petty issues. As a result, he deflates their concerns by not dealing with them first. By chapter seven, Paul finally addresses the factions within the church. The first division was between those who represented the merger of Christianity and Judaism, upholding dietary and purity laws, circumcision and marriage as a means of procreation (identified as 1) and those who wanted to get rid of Jewish traditions, dietary and purity laws, circumcision, marriage, children and sex (identified as 2). A second division was between the powerful and wealthy men and women within the church. As we go through the dialogue of verses 1-9, we find that Paul's pithy comments affirm the juxtaposed ideas, and his absurd comments reveal that he really didn't take them seriously. What the community finds to be ultimate concerns, Paul finds amusing.

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote. (2)--It is well for a man not to touch a woman. (1)--But because of temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. (Women)--The Husband should give to his wife sexual satisfaction. (Men)--And likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body but the husband does. (Women)--Likewise the husband does not rule over his own body the wife does. (1)--Do not refuse one another (2)--except perhaps by agreement for a season, that you may devote yourself to prayer. (2)--But then come together again (1)--lest Satan tempt you through lack of self-control. (2)--I say this by way of concession, not of command. I wish that all were as I myself am. (Paul throws in the next comment and confuses everyone.) But each has a special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. (Huh?) (2)--To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do. (1)--But if they cannot exercise

self-control, they should marry. (Paul throws in another comment to confuse them.) For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion. (Huh?)

As we continue through the verses, we find an increasing number of Huh?'s in response to Paul's statements, particularly the following:

Otherwise, your children will be unclean, but as it is they are holy. (Huh?) Or, this is my rule in all the churches. Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to undo the circumcision. (Huh?) (How would a person do that?)"<sup>36</sup>

This tactic of Paul's was sure to deflate those on either side of the issue where ideas were lifted up as superior or efforts made to have all conform to one particular paradigm.

In chapter fourteen Paul deals with decency and order in the community's worship, with regard to prophecy. Verses 26f offer rules regarding the use of spiritual gifts. Paul says that each person has a gift to share with the body for its edification. Dissension and questioning the use of gifts is to be minimized because it only leads to confusion, and God is not a God of confusion, but of peace. Therefore, in verses 33b-36, we find a community rule that dares to address those persons who question the gifts of others.

The community rule of 1 Cor. 14:34-36 presupposes that, within the Christian worship assembly, wives had dared to question other women's husbands or point out some mistakes

---

<sup>36</sup>Doug Adams, "Paul as Grandmother," (Biblical Drama), Modern Liturgy 12, no.1 (Feb. 1985):10.

of their own during the congregational interpreting of the Scriptures and of prophecy.<sup>37</sup>

The issue was not that women should be subordinate to their husbands or to the leadership in the community. The issue was that this kind of questioning was against their laws and customs. The major concern of the text was for orderly and quiet conduct that maintained order and decency within the worship service. This concern of Paul's stood over against orgiastic, secret and oriental cults which often were given to display of emotion, ecstasy and unruly behavior during their worship.<sup>38</sup>

In Cor. 11:2-16, verses 2-10 quote the traditional rationale for the veiling of women, with which they were all familiar. However, in verses 11f Paul turns the tables on them by stating that a woman's hair was given as a covering. Paul argues that if you want to argue over such a little thing as hair, then follow tradition. Paul's point, again in this text, is for decency and order in worship. Evidently, there were oriental cults in Corinth, i.e., Isis cult, which recognized flowing and unbound hair as necessary to the producing of magical incantations and a sign of a person's ecstatic endowment with the spirit. The Corinthian church undoubtedly borrowed some of this behavior, and women prophets and liturgists were letting their hair flow in a disheveled fashion during worship. Paul endeavors to curb this behavior by lifting up those behaviors which are upbuilding to the community and which produce an intelligible proclamation of the gospel as

---

<sup>37</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 232.

<sup>38</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 232.

signs of the spirit's presence in the community, rather than frenzied display of emotion and activity.<sup>39</sup>

During Paul's lifetime, leadership roles within the house churches were still fluid and diversified, and church authority was based on charismatic ability to lead. However, in the last decade of the first century, institutionalization gradually became solidified as the church took on the patriarchal paradigm of the household. Church authority moved from being vested in charismatic leadership to leadership proven by a number of criteria which tended to harken back to the classical city-state of Sparta and a rigid honor/shame system. The leadership positions of elder, deacon and bishop were open only to husbands who had shown an ability to rule their own household of one wife and successfully raised children (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9).<sup>40</sup> Colossians, Ephesians, the pastoral epistles, and I Peter all advocated the adoption of the patriarchal household paradigm with its injunctions to subordination and submission of women, children and slaves.<sup>41</sup>

Colossians draws upon philosophical-theological material from the Greco-Roman milieu as it spiritualizes and moralizes the pre-Pauline baptismal formula in Gal. 3:28. It combines this formula with the household code ethic to come up with a "Christian social ethic." One redeeming factor is that this understanding of the Christian social ethic is found only in one segment of the early Christian church, the deutero-Pauline tradition, and not the Jesus

---

<sup>39</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 227-28.

<sup>40</sup>Fiorenza, "Interpreting Patriarchal Traditions," 54.

<sup>41</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 246.

tradition. The deuterio-Pauline tradition shows an insistence on accepting the "established political-social status quo of inequality and exploitation in the name of Jesus Christ."<sup>42</sup> One Peter 2:11-3:12 also has a political context in mind as it focuses upon the duties of subordinate members of the household with regard to the state, household and marriage.

This discussion begins with a demand for submission to human governors (2:13-17) then exhorts slaves to be submissive even to hard and unjust masters (2:18-25), and asks Christian wives to submit themselves to their husbands, even when the latter are pagans and actively against the Christian community by being disobedient to the word (3:1-6).<sup>43</sup>

The author spiritualizes and moralizes Christ's suffering as an appeal to wives to be submissive and reticent in the face of opposition ("let nothing terrify you"), but it is also hoped that such action will bring about the conversion of husbands to Christianity "without saying a word." Wives were not to instruct their husbands or seek to convince them of the importance of becoming a Christian. What was important was a quiet and gentle heart in the face of slanderous opposition.

It is not adornment, but the quietness of spirit seeking peace and harmony in submitting to their husbands as their lords which might convince the husbands that their wives are law-abiding and virtuous. Through their behavior they will prove false the slanderous accusations against Christians.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 253-54.

<sup>43</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 260.

<sup>44</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 262.

The patriarchal submission within this text was not meant to put wives back into their place and role within the patriarchal household structure. It was meant to lessen the tension between the Christian community and the Imperial Roman culture which was becoming more solidified. Evidently, the conversion of wives and slaves in the last decade of the first century was provoking political tension.<sup>45</sup>

Ephesians takes the cosmic focus of Colossians and reinterprets it in terms of ecclesiology. Christ becomes the head of the church and universal peacemaker. The writer of Ephesians is seeking unity, equality and mutuality between Jews and Gentiles within the household of God. Consequently, he takes the patriarchal household paradigm and applies it to marriage, relationships between masters and slaves and as a paradigm for understanding the structure within the church. Christ becomes the bridegroom and the church becomes the bride, totally dependent and subject to Christ out of love for God. However, in doing this, he reasserts submission and inequality for wives. Therefore, wives are commanded to be obedient and submissive to their husbands out of Christian duty and out of Christ's command to love.<sup>46</sup>

What we need to keep in mind is that the reinterpretation of the household code and its theological legitimation by the deuterio-Pauline writers was not descriptive of the actual experience of women and slaves. It is purely exhortative in its efforts to establish Christian behavior that is not yet realized within the community. The deuterio-Pauline literature

---

<sup>45</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 262.

<sup>46</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 267-70.

endeavored to lessen the tension between the Christian community and the changing Greco-Roman milieu by adapting one tradition of the Christian missionary movement to patriarchal structures and mores. It is the mind-set of these writers that sufferings and persecutions are avoidable through such adaptations, even though the gospel writers insisted that sufferings and persecutions were unavoidable.<sup>47</sup>

Fiorenza states that "from a sociological perspective, the gradual institutionalization and adaptation of the Christian movement to the patriarchal social structures of the time was unavoidable if the Christian community was to expand and to survive."<sup>48</sup> I really question this conclusion, based upon the experience of women in the Greco-Roman world. I do believe that the gnostic-patristic trajectory played a very important role in the church's removal of women from leadership positions and their relegation to the fringes of the Christian community. Also, the Christianization of the Roman Empire did not help in the perpetuation of patriarchal paradigms. Therefore, this needs to be a subject of further study to analyze how gnostic and patristic writers influenced the gradual stripping away of women's self-identity as women and led to their accepting masculine images and paradigms of subordination and domination.

I must agree with Fiorenza that we really need to view the biblical text with suspicion. Many texts are reflective of male experience, opinions and efforts to control the lives of others, especially women. Consequently, we are called by Christ to look deeper within the contextual *Sitz im Leben* in order

---

<sup>47</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 270, 334.

<sup>48</sup>Fiorenza, "Interpreting Patriarchal Traditions," 54-5.



to discover women's historical reality and experience. I hope we have caught some glimpses of what that reality and experience was like. Moreover, we need to keep in mind that places where women are lifted up or marginalized were a result of the social tension between patriarchal and egalitarian structures within the Greco-Roman world. The formalized canon of codified patriarchal law was more restrictive than the actual social context of interrelationships experienced by men and women. Women's actual social-religious status is best determined by looking at the degree of economic autonomy and social roles rather than ideal prescriptive statements drawn from philosophical writings.<sup>49</sup>

Five guidelines to keep in mind when interpreting biblical texts which are suggested by Fiorenza and which I have modified are:

1. Historical texts must be understood or evaluated in their historical setting, language, and form. The Biblical texts originated in a culture which reflected patriarchal and egalitarian paradigms. The texts reflect a reaction to a particular *sitz im leben* that endeavors in some texts to remove the tension by focusing on the values of a patriarchal culture over against the values of a more egalitarian society. Other texts significantly work to depatriarchalize the contextual situation.

2. We also need to be aware of the contextual experiences of persons within the text in order to ask this next question. What experiences of persons were presented as diminished, which, if we were to highlight them, would give a clearer picture of the situation?

---

<sup>49</sup>Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 108-9.

3. In what way is the text oppressive to certain groups of people, reflecting only one point of view? How could the text be liberating if we looked at both sides of the issue?

4. The recording, translation and interpretation of the biblical texts have been an androcentric endeavor in the past, which diminishes or leaves out the feminine perspective.

5. Biblical revelation and truth about women can best be found in those texts which transcend and criticize patriarchal paradigms.<sup>50</sup>

Using Fiorenza's insightful guidelines, let me summarize by rearticulating the six key questions which I offer as a result of gleaning insights from the writings of feminist authors. I believe that these questions will give helpful insight into the experiences of men and women in the Greco-Roman world, will help us glean a feminine perspective within the text and enable us to make more appropriate applications to our contemporary context.

1. How does the text perpetuate images of women or persons as altruistic-assertive enablers in order to meet the deeper needs of persons who are in control? (How does the system of honor and shame expose the dynamics present within the particular context?)

2. What external or internal threat to a particular group's self-identity gives rise to the exercise of authority, power, and control over persons' lives prohibiting their full participation in society? (How does the element of honor and shame give rise to the drawing of rigid boundary lines?)

---

<sup>50</sup>Fiorenza, "Interpreting Patriarchal Traditions," 60-1.

3. How is the household metaphor of patriarchy versus the metaphor of partnership in tension within the text? If this tension is missing, how has its removal been justified?

4. How does the exercise of authority as partnership bring about reconciliation, healing, and the reign of God into the contextual situation, and/or how does the exercise of authority or patriarchalism result in marginalization and disenfranchisement within the contextual situation?

5. Where do we see the hermeneutic of depatriarchalization functioning within the text?

6. How are differences recognized and celebrated within the biblical text, or is everyone compelled to conform to one image or paradigm?

## Chapter 5

### Empowered for Ministry

The church ought to be the place where persons can express their true giftedness, celebrate differences and experience the liberating power of the gospel. However, what is oftentimes experienced is white male, patriarchal norms and standards that bind both men and women to prescribed gender roles. Many recovering addicts who turn to the church for help end up trading one addiction for another. The church attracts co-dependent people as it espouses the image of unconditional love and acceptance. Moreover, what these individuals find are co-dependent ministers and parishioners who bought into a one-sided interpretation of the gospel that binds persons to a shame-based system of co-dependency. If we interpret the scriptures only through the eyes of men, we are denying the experience of women. If we perpetuate what we think is the model of the patriarchal household from the scriptures as a paradigm for male and female gender roles, we misunderstand and misappropriate the experience of men and women from the Greco-Roman world out of which the Second Testament texts evolved. Such misappropriation binds persons and communities to the past and to rigid structures rather than being fluid and multivalent, enabling persons and communities to resymbolize and resignify what is meaningful, what brings healing, and what speaks of their experience of the gospel in their midst.

The tension between patriarchal structures and their combined systems of the household, patronage system, honor and shame systems and

egalitarian structures enabled women to move out from what appeared to be a rigid private sphere of the household into the community where they engaged in the patronage system of brokerage and friendship. Here women obtained wealth, honor and standing that gave them equality, personal power, and influence in the Greco-Roman world. These women used the household, patronage, and honor and shame systems to their advantage as they influenced the lives of others, owned property, and became patrons and leaders of house churches, missionaries, preachers, and so forth.

The biblical texts which have survived are a multifaceted response to the evolving Greco-Roman milieu which struggled with the independence and assertiveness of women. The first of six key questions formulated in chapter 4 addresses those texts which try to counter the independent and assertive image of women found in the Greco-Roman milieu. Eve is a good example of the altruistic-assertive enabler image which men tried to perpetuate in order to quiet their fears and take control. As ministers, we need to be aware of those texts that have this underlying element of perpetuating an image of women or persons as altruistic-assertive enablers in order to meet an even deeper need of those who are in control. We might also note how an understanding of the honor and shame system enables persons to take control out of individual hands and places them in a state of toxic shame.

The second key question addresses the behavior of persons or groups who are threatened either internally or externally. Such threats engender questions of individual and/or group self-identity. In order to counter these threats, persons try to exert authority, power, control, and so forth, over other persons or groups in an effort to maintain their self-identity at the expense of others. The Jewish people oftentimes experienced

marginalization and disenfranchisement and, as a result, tried to draw rigid boundary lines around those areas which they felt they could control.

Questions three and four deal with the tension between paradigms of patriarchalism and egalitarianism and the exercise of authority within each. The Jesus tradition gives us many images of shared authority as partnership over against patriarchal and hierarchal images within the biblical texts. Even Paul addressed the tension in the minds of his readers between those who wanted to draw firm patriarchal lines over against those who chose a more free egalitarian approach in which differences were celebrated. Within our own churches where women are relegated to lesser positions on a ministerial staff, the tension still exists. Such exercise of authority from the top down and, especially, when it is white male patriarchal authority, results in marginalization and disenfranchisement of women and people of color within the church. And yet, in other churches we find authority exercised as partnership enabling reconciliation, healing and the reign of God in our midst. Women and people of color need models of empowerment through shared authority if the reign of God is truly to be experienced in our midst. They also need to be involved in support groups where their stories can be told, and where they are affirmed and empowered to take back the personal power which they have given away or which has been taken from them.

Fifth, it is important for those of us who come from a predominately co-dependent culture to name and wrestle with the dynamics within the text. We need to identify where the hermeneutic of depatriarchalization is functioning in order to help us identify areas where we are in denial and in need of liberation in our own lives. And sixth, we need to be aware of how differences are recognized and celebrated or not celebrated within the

biblical text. Paul drew upon a multiplicity of traditions to express the coherent core of the gospel--the righteousness of God revealed in the death/resurrection of Christ and given to all peoples as God's liberating act for all creation. To remove this multiplicity as the Post-Pauline tradition does is to do a disservice to the central core of the gospel which Paul expresses in Gal. 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Jesus Christ." The reign of God is experienced when differences are recognized and celebrated--where answers are not defined as either/or, but as both/and, embrace so much more.

## Appendix

### A Practical Application: A Sermon 1 Corinthians 7:1-9

My ninety-year-old landlady, a retired business woman, was a buyer and seller in the clothing industry for many years. She tried to juggle a career, which took her away from home on many buying trips to the east, and a family, in an era when the preferred place for a woman was in the home raising children and caring for a working husband. Last summer she gave me two cartoon strips from the Los Angeles Times, (Wednesday, August 16, 1989). The first is "Cathy" (Cathy Guisewite). In this cartoon strip, Cathy and Charlene have just picked up a video and are on their way to the cashier. Charlene is saying, "Frankie wanted me sexier. I got sexier. Jeff wanted me more demure. I got more demure. Tony wanted glitz. I got glitzier. Ed wanted earthy. John wanted elegant. Ted wanted brainy. Brian wanted artsy. Don wanted dainty." Suddenly, they arrive at the cashier's desk. The gentleman sitting behind the desk responds, "Hi." Charlene becomes enraged, leans forward, and screams, "AND WHAT DO YOU WANT?!!" Of course, Cathy, stunned by the sudden outburst, grabs Charlene's hand and replies, "Time to go, Charlene. . . ." Charlene, bewildered, her eyes crossed and her tongue hanging out, sputters, "Stand back. I feel the real me starting to emerge." The second is "Peanuts" (Schulz). In this cartoon strip, Snoopy is lying on the roof of his dog house with his head posed over the end, staring at Lucy who is saying, "You've been a dog all your life, haven't you?" She



thinks for a moment and then says, "I've often wondered what made you decide to become a dog." Snoopy is now lying on his back with his long ears hanging vertically on either side of the roof. He responds: "I was fooled by the job description." My landlady and I nervously chuckled at the irony of each comic strip. Illustrated in both of these comic strips is the tension often experienced by women today when their behavior is determined by others.

For centuries, women have been discounted and deprived of the opportunity to be fully functioning human beings because other persons, usually male but even including women, insist on defining them according to male standards. In fact, Aristotle and his followers had a tremendous impact upon male and female gender roles. Drawing upon scientific and biological reasons, since he was a doctor, he said, "Well, of course, women are the weaker, defective and underdeveloped sex and ought to be ruled by the more fully rational and developed male. Would you not agree?!" "Women ought to be in the home where they can be protected and ruled, while a man's place ought to be in the world where he can show his ability to rule others well" (my quotes). Now there might be some among us who quite agree with this rationale. We, like Snoopy, are fooled by the job descriptions meted out to us by those who are in positions of power and authority--those who are in control.

One such example of women's behavior being determined and defined by persons other than females is the current issue of abortion. Nations, countries, states, politicians, religious denominations, local churches and even individuals within local churches and communities stand ready to defend opposing positions. On the one side of the abortion debate, we have the pro-lifers whose position rallies around the belief in the sanctity of human life,

and, specifically, in the rights of the unborn child. The first two reasons pro-lifers give for this belief is based upon scripture. Drawing upon the book of Genesis, they say it's God who ordained sexuality and procreation when God said "be fruitful and multiply." And secondly, in the book of Exodus 21:22-24, we find illustrated the rule of retribution for injury done to a female with child. The rule reads: when life is taken, the extraction of life is required. They give three additional points: First, since Jesus Christ became flesh through the impregnation of Mary and was born a baby, so too every baby that is born is born of God. What begins to happen is that the sacredness of human life becomes so abstracted to a christological and incarnational level that it becomes difficult to apply it to concrete situations.<sup>1</sup> A second point offered is the reality that many women do incur psychological trauma as the result of an abortion. Yet, there are also those who do not. But don't we all struggle with unresolved guilt, fear and grief as the result of any kind of loss? And finally, some pro-lifers view abortion as "a profound rebellion against God." Pat Tony, a United Methodist minister, believes that if we justify abortion, we are in rebellion against God and scripture.<sup>2</sup> However, if we totally and unequivocally accept the pro-life stance, are we not agreeing to the continued demeaning of women and the denial of the basic human right to have control over one's own body?

Let's look at the other side of the issue. Pro-choice advocates take a much more practical focus in their decision-making. Yes, they, too, uphold

---

<sup>1</sup>R. Wayne Perkins, "Our Stand on Abortion," Circuit Rider, February 1990: 5.

<sup>2</sup>Pat B. Tony, "Our Stand Is Too Open," Circuit Rider, February 1990: 6-7.

the sacredness of life but their focus is more upon the mother's well-being. They believe that a mother/woman has a right to be a participant in the decision-making process when it directly affects her body. With this in mind, what would be our decision given the following examples: A woman in a coma as a result of an auto accident will die unless the child she carries is aborted. A schizophrenic psychotic patient is raped by a fellow patient and impregnated. A twelve-year-old girl is raped by three boys, infecting her with gonorrhea. If she is treated, the baby will be severely affected. If the condition goes untreated, she will lose her life. Babies who suffer from Trisomy 18, Tay Sachs, and Hurler's syndrome have a life expectancy of anywhere from eight months to ten years and, in many cases, require extensive institutionalization.<sup>3</sup>

Consider the kinds of issues these examples would raise: Who will pay for the hospital, doctor, and institutional bills, and needless to say, the emotional trauma to the parents? The whole issue boils down to who will decide the fate of a particular woman's tragic conflict? Will we let the legislators? "The law (state or federal)? The courts? The man? The woman?"<sup>4</sup> Can we agree with the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision which ruled that the beginning of life is when the infant is independent of its mother? Or, does life begin when the mother feels movement in the womb, and not before? Or, does life begin at conception, and can we document that moment in time? "How do we decide when there is life? Who decides?

---

<sup>3</sup>Perkins, 4-5.

<sup>4</sup>Keith I. Pohl, "Abortion: A Question of Life," Circuit Rider, February 1990: 3.

What determines what is sinful? Who decides that?"<sup>5</sup> How can these abstract philosophical questions fit concrete practical situations? R. Benjamin Garrison, a United Methodist minister, writes:

Moralists (usually male) discuss with lawyers (usually male) what may morally and legally be done by physicians (also usually male). They often overlook the responsibility of the male both before and after the conception. Meanwhile the woman must feel like screaming, "Hey! Look at me! I'm involved in this and will be long after you experts fold your books and silently sneak away."<sup>6</sup>

Paul wrestled with a similar controversy in the Corinthian church with regard to marriage. Many of you might ask: "Can Paul say anything positive about the issue of marriage and women's gender roles, let alone the issue of abortion?" He often does get blamed for having anything but a positive attitude towards women. However, I think Paul can give us some helpful insights on how to deal with the abortion issue, marriage or any other issue dealing with relationships which arise within the church and in our own personal lives.

In 1 Cor. 7:1-9, Paul is dealing with two major divisions in the church at Corinth with regard to the issue of marriage. On the one side, there are those who uphold the traditional values of marriage, sex, progeny and women's gender roles within the household and, on the other side, there are those who want to get rid of traditional values, marriage, sex, progeny and

---

<sup>5</sup>Pohl, 3.

<sup>6</sup>R. Benjamin Garrison, "Our Stand Is Too Rigid," Circuit Rider, February 1990: 8.

women's gender roles within the household. Basically, these two differences are born out of differing philosophical viewpoints on how life "ought" to be lived.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup>**Key Question 1:** In the Corinthian conflict the various dissenting groups favored differing images of female gender roles. Those who adhered to strict dietary and purity laws, circumcision and marriage as procreation tended to perpetuate images of women as altruistic-assertive enablers for the purpose of upholding male needs for emotional support and sexual satisfaction, male and Jewish self-identity through procreation and submissive obedience. **Key Question 2:** The dissenting groups in Corinth were endeavoring to exercise their authority, power and eventual control over persons in order to put forth their perspective of orthodox or non-orthodox behavior in a time of external and internal conflict. Isaiah Gafni, professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, stated this past December that the Hellenistic era was a time of cosmopolitan thinking and individualism. People claimed to be citizens of the world. State, racial and tribal barriers fell. It was believed that if one spoke and thought Greek, they were indeed Greek. Many were willing to cross racial, tribal and religious barriers in order to play the political game and move up in the ranks. Jews encountered the Greek culture on a daily basis and its values easily impregnated every aspect of their lives. Many accepted the lifestyle and gods of the Greco-Roman world while remaining Jewish. However, this produced an apparent tension within those Jews who, while accepting the Hellenistic cultural lifestyle in order to get ahead, were also cognizant of the Torah's legal stipulations on issues of affairs with women, marriage, and so forth.

The element of honor and shame also increased the tension. For Jewish women to move out into the public sphere as many of their Hellenistic counterparts were doing would not only be interpreted as a lack of control on the part of the male head of household, but would also threaten his self-identity. Therefore, it was necessary to keep women within the household so as not to bring shame upon the entire family. However, for the Jews, this proved to be an apparent double standard. While wives were kept at home under their husband's control, adhering to traditional Jewish standards, and bringing honor to their husbands, the husbands lived a religiously compromising life in the public sphere in an effort not to bring shame upon themselves by having the Greeks and Romans rule over them.

Paul offers us two major insights from his work with the Corinthians which can help us in our contemporary context. The first insight has to do with egalitarianism. Many of the Corinthians believed they were better off economically, intellectually and religiously. They even believed they knew better what the behavior of persons ought to be within the church. In chapter 1:26-30, we find Paul reminding them of what is really important:

For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; therefore, as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord.

All of their wealth, religious practices, and noble birth were nothing in the eyes of God because life was to be found in Christ, who made persons wise, righteous, sanctified and redeemed.<sup>8</sup> In the first six chapters, Paul addresses their unchristian behavior, immorality and arrogance. And then, in this chapter seven, he addresses their concerns. Paul finds that their concerns are based on personal "shoulds" and "oughts" in an effort to control the lives of others. As a result, we see Paul in 1 Cor. 7:1-9 weaving his way back and forth through the dissenting groups, offering a pithy comment in support of one group and then an opposing comment in favor of the other group, in

---

<sup>8</sup>**Key Question 3:** The opposing groups are using the metaphor of patriarchy to accomplish their ends. However, Paul suggests the metaphor of partnership as a way to solve the conflict within the Corinthian church.

order to lift up the pettiness of their concerns. For example, he says in verses 3 and 4: "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does." Paul uses this rhetorical tactic to deflate their arrogant and superior attitude which tried to conform everyone to the same set of orthodox standards. Women conformed to male standards. Paul upholds the marriage relationship as a partnership. He realizes that not everyone can be conformed to one way of thinking and acting. Paul sees each person as individually gifted, and the community's role is to accept those differences, letting God do the work of redemption, the work of righteousness and sanctification in individual lives.<sup>9</sup>

Paul takes a more centralist point of view, choosing to keep the tension alive between the divisions in order to allow God's Spirit to move more freely in the midst of plurality and a multiplicity of positions. To do otherwise would stifle God's Spirit and would be an act of rebellion against God if power and control was placed in the hands of a few who determined the behavior of all. Isn't this what women are fighting against? Those who have the power and authority legislate what women's behavior and role will be in society. However, this stifles the spirit of God and the spirit of women as well.

---

**<sup>9</sup>Key Question 4:** Paul utilizes his rhetorical style to exercise authority as partnership in order to bring about reconciliation between opposing groups and, thus, allow the reign of God among them. If Paul had sided with either group, it would have resulted in the marginalizing and disenfranchizing of one group over the other.

We, both male and female, find hope in those countries throughout the world which are endeavoring to take a more egalitarian approach to decision-making, allowing for the freedom of God's spirit to work in the midst of differences. We find hope when we see the changes taking place in East Germany, Russia, Bulgaria, Romania and other places throughout the world where individuals are given the freedom of choice. We find hope when persons are given the right to choose their own destiny, instead of having it decided by others. We find hope when religious denominations take a more centralist view on abortion. The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church states:

Our belief in the sanctity of unborn human life makes us reluctant to approve abortion. But we are equally bound to respect the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother, for whom devastating damage may result from an unacceptable pregnancy. In continuity with past Christian teaching, we recognize tragic conflicts of life with life that may justify abortion, and in such cases support the legal option of abortion under proper medical procedures. A decision concerning abortion should be made only after thoughtful and prayerful consideration by the parties involved, with medical, pastoral, and other appropriate counsel.(UM Book of Discipline, par. 71-G, 1988)

The internal tension which women experience over their role in society will be removed when women are given the right to choose their own destiny.

The second insight we glean from 1 Cor. 7:1-9 is the idea of reciprocity. According to Paul, marriage, friendship, and relationships are reciprocal. Each of these speaks of trust, equality and partnership in which the needs of both males and females are met. Paul's major concern was uniting the body of Christ, not dividing it. In Galatians 3:28 he states: "There is neither Jew



nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Paul goes on to recognize in chapters twelve and fourteen of I Corinthians the differences in our giftedness which are given by God to edify the whole body; and then, in chapter thirteen, he states that love ought to be the motivating force behind our thoughts, words, and actions.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, how can we allow the acceptance of job descriptions that place women in positions where they have no control over their own lives? And how can we say that a baby tragically born out of violence, lust or carelessness is born of God?<sup>11</sup> Scripture is not the only avenue through which we must wrestle with issues of abortion, gender roles, and so forth. Don't we also need to add to our God-given reasoning ability, experience and tradition in helping us determine what is the responsible thing to do? If our governmental leaders want to wield political power and rule that the fetus must be protected at all cost, will they also provide the money for the care of severely handicapped and unwanted children? Will they educate and employ needed social workers in order to do an adequate job in effectively placing children in homes where they are loved? Will they provide sex education and birth control programs to cut down on abortions? I don't

---

<sup>10</sup>**Key Question 5:** Galations 3:28 is a pivotal passage enabling depatriarchalism through its model of partnership, equalitarianism. This model permeates Paul's work in I Corinthians. **Key Question 6:** It is through the acceptance of differences that differences are recognized and celebrated as individuals allow those differences to be used for the upbuilding of the entire body, unlike those who desire all to conform to one paradigm.

<sup>11</sup>Garrison, 9.

think so. The powerful are more interested in imposing their wants and desires upon the powerless, not in rectifying the root cause. Thus, the responsibility lies in the hands of the people. We are the one's who are responsible to correct and prevent conditions that cause problem pregnancies. It is our responsibility to care for our brothers and sisters and see that each is treated with equity and reciprocity.

H. Richard Niebuhr in his book, The Responsible Self, states that we have a responsibility to act responsibly in our relationships with others. Our responsibility lies in our ability to accept the consequences of our actions. And these actions become responsible actions when we take responsibility for how they affect our on-going relationships with others. Are we acting responsibly when we place persons in a state of powerlessness and take away even their personal control over their own bodies? Garrison, a responder in the abortion issue, states:

Persons of integrity will neither initiate nor terminate life except with awe and reverence. If that is offered, then, which ever decision is taken, people of faith should be willing to leave the rest to the loving grace of God.<sup>12</sup>

The question which lies before us is how are we enabling women and ourselves to accept differences and work towards equality and partnership in relationships with others? One way we can do this is by giving women the right to be autonomous, to define their own gender role in society, and to exercise the freedom to control their personal destiny.

In conclusion, the church is a place where people are respected as persons, regardless of their gender. It is a place where persons find mutual

---

<sup>12</sup>Garrison, 8.

support, are treated with equality, and experience relationships of reciprocity. It is a place where persons are free to become full human beings and free to make those decisions that affect their personal well-being.

Beverly Harrison in her book, Making the Connections, states:

We are called to a radical activity of love, to a way of being in the world that deepens relations, embodies and extends community, passes on the gift of life. We are called to confront . . . that which thwarts the power of human personal and communal becoming, that which twists relationships, which denies human well-being, community, and human solidarity to so many in our world. To confront these things, and to stay on the path of confrontation, to break through the "lies, secrets and silences" that mask the prevailing distortions and manipulations in relationships and the power of relations is the vocation of those who are Jesus' followers.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup>Beverly Harrison, Making the Connections, ed. Carol S. Robb (Boston: Beacon, 1985), 18-9.

## Bibliography

### Books

- Balsdon, J. P. V. D. Roman Women. London: Bodley Head, 1962.
- Beker, Christiaan. Paul, the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980.
- Bonnard, Andre'. Greek Civilization. New York: Macmillan, 1957.
- Bradshaw, John. Healing the Shame that Binds You. Deerfield Beach, Fla.: Health Communications, 1988.
- Cantor, Aviva. "The Lilith Question." On Being a Jewish Feminist. Ed. Susannah Heschel. New York: Schocken, 1983.
- Cassius Dio, Cocceianus. Dio's Roman History. Vols. 5, 6, 7. Trans. Earnest Cary. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1960-69.
- Dewey, Joanna. "Images of Women." The Liberating Word. Ed. Letty M. Russell. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976.
- Dickinson, G. Lowes. The Greek View of Life. London: Methuen, 1904.
- Eisenstadt, S. N., and L. Roniger. Patrons, Clients and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984.
- Finley, M. I. The Ancient Greeks. New York: Viking, 1963.
- Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schussler. Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation. Boston: Beacon, 1984.
- \_\_\_\_\_. In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins. New York: Crossroad, 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Interpreting Patriarchal Traditions." The Liberating Word. Ed. Letty M. Russell. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976.

- Foucault, Michel. The Use of Pleasure. New York: Pantheon, 1985.
- Frager, Robert, and James Fadiman. Personality and Personal Growth. New York: Harper & Row, 1984.
- Greenleaf, Robert K. Servant Leadership. New York: Paulist, 1977.
- Hadas, Moses. Hellenistic Culture. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1959.
- Hamilton, Edith. The Echo of Greece. New York: Norton, 1957.
- . The Greek Way. New York: Norton, 1942.
- Hamilton, Edith, and Huntington Cairns. The Collected Dialogues of Plato including the Letters. New York: Bollingin Foundation, 1961.
- Harrison, Beverly W. Making the Connections. Ed. Carol S. Robb. Boston: Beacon, 1985.
- Harvey, Susan Ashbrook. "Women in Early Syrian Christianity." Images of Women in Antiquity. Eds. Averil Cameron and Amelie Kuhrt. Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1983.
- Hayes, Carlton J. H. Ancient Civilizations. New York: Macmillan, 1983.
- Lefkowitz, Mary R. "Influential Women." Images of Women in Antiquity. Eds. Averil Cameron and Amelie Kuhrt. Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1983.
- Malina, Bruce J. The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology. Atlanta: John Knox, 1981.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. The Responsible Self. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1963.
- Pomeroy, Sarah B. Women in Hellenistic Egypt. New York: Schocken, 1984.
- Russell, Letty M. Household of Freedom: Authority in Feminist Theology. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987.
- Russell, Letty M., ed. Feminist Interpretation of the Bible. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985.

- Saller, Richard P. Personal Patronage under the Early Empire. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982.
- Sancisi-Weerdenburg, Heleen. "Exit Atossa: Images of Women in Greek Historiography on Persia." Images of Women in Antiquity. Eds. Averil Cameron and Amelie Kuhrt. Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1983.
- Scarf, Mimi. "Marriages Made in Heaven?" On Being a Jewish Feminist. Ed. Susannah Heschel. New York: Schocken, 1983.
- Schaefer, Anne Wilson. When Society Becomes an Addict. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987.
- Suetonius Tranquillus, C. Suetonius. Vols. 1-2. Trans. J. C. Rolfe. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1964-65.
- Tacitus, Cornelius. Tacitus: The Histories, The Annals. Vol. 3. Trans. Clifford H. Moore and John Jackson. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963.
- Torjesen, Karen Jo. "Public Roles, Domestic Virtues: The Controversies over Women's Leadership." Sex, Sin and Woman: Social Histories of Theological Ideas. Harper & Row, forthcoming.
- Trible, Phyllis. Texts of Terror. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984.
- Van Bremen, Riet. "Women and Wealth." Images of Women in Antiquity. Eds. Averil Cameron and Amelie Kuhrt. Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1983.
- Walker, Lenore E. The Battered Woman. New York: Harper & Row, 1979.

#### Other Sources

- Adams, Doug. "Paul as Grandmother." (Biblical Drama). Modern Liturgy 12, no. 1 (February 1985): 10-1.
- Garrison, R. Benjamin. "Our Stand Is Too Rigid." Circuit Rider, February 1990: 7-9.

Perkins, R. Wayne. "Our Stand on Abortion." Circuit Rider, February 1990: 4-5, 8-9.

Pohl, Keith I. "Abortion: A Question of Life." Circuit Rider, February 1990: 3.

Subby, Robert, and John Friel. Co-Dependency and Family Rules. Pompano Beach, Fla.: Health Communications, n.d.

Tony, Pat B. "Our Stand Is Too Open." Circuit Rider, February 1990: 6-7, 9.